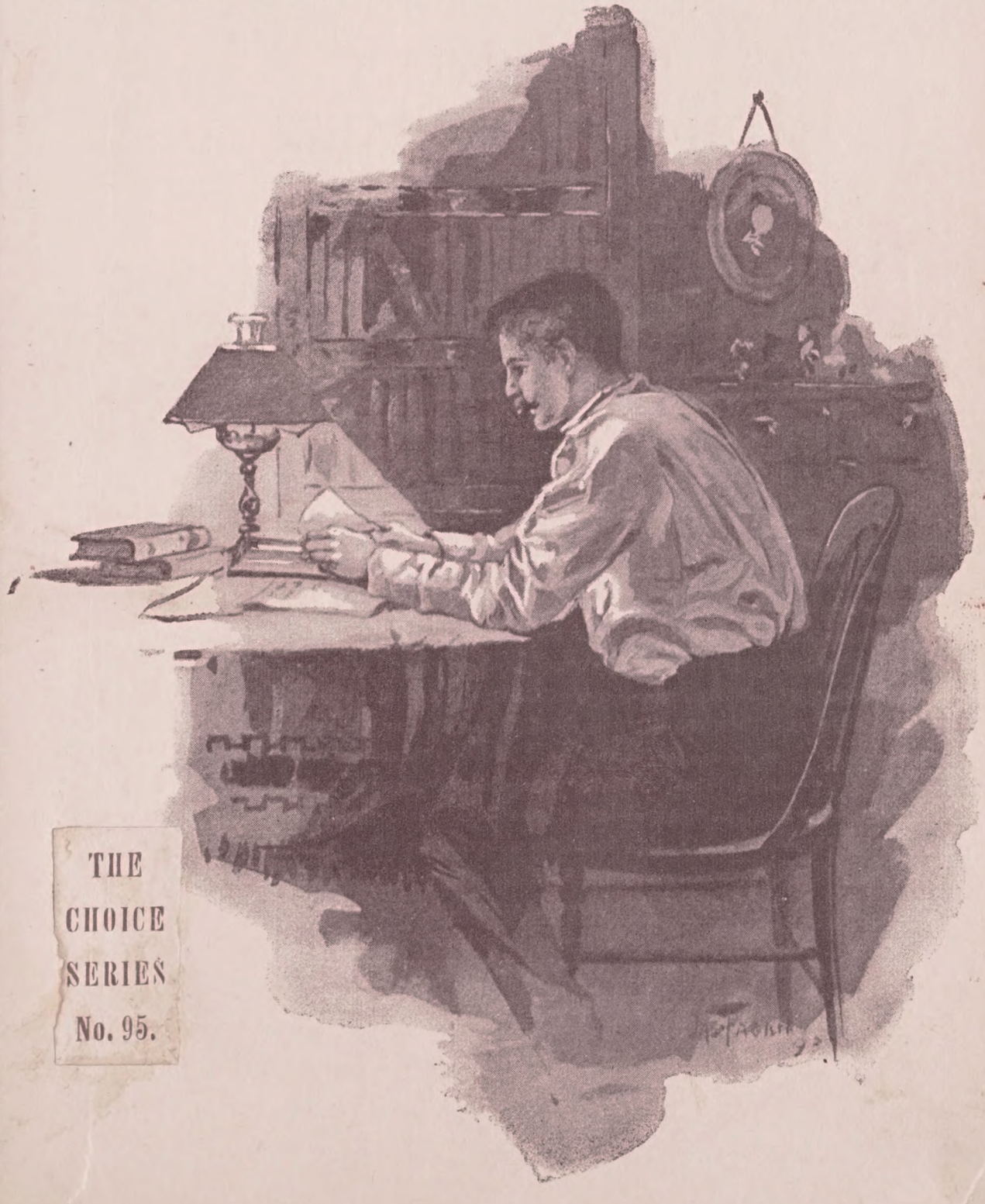
THE
Tell-Tale Watch

FROM THE GERMAN OF GEORGE HÖCKER

By Meta De Vere.

ILLUSTRATED BY JAMES FAGAN.



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THE TELL-TALE WATCH

(Der Lebende hat Recht.)

A Novel.

FROM THE GERMAN OF

GEORGE HÖCKER

BY

META DE VERE.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES FAGAN.

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THE TELL-TALE WATCH.

CHAPTER I.

"Watchman! Watchman!"

Fearfully the call re-echoed through the silent winter night, but often as it was repeated, it did not reach the ears of the man in his thick cloak, who was leaning against one of the tall stone pillars that formed the entrance to a small garden. Unmindful of the constant downpour of raindrops, mingled with snowflakes, he seemed to be able to sleep in a standing posture, for he never stirred.

"Watchman! Watchman!" the call came again; it sounded nearer and clearer.

The next moment a tall man, also wrapped in a heavy cloak, came with a powerful but elastic step down the aristocratic, quiet Neander Street, in Sea-

ton, a suburb of Cologne, virtually a part of the great city. He was evidently greatly excited, and looked on either side to see if somewhere help might be attainable. Now he turned into Louis Street, and here he discovered the watchman who, overcome by sleep, had sunk down at the foot of the pillar.

"Watchman! Watchman!" he shouted. "Don't you hear?"

"Thunder and lightning! Don't I hear? Can't a man take his little nap undisturbed?" growled the sleeper, stretching his stiffened limbs. Then he passed his thick fur glove over his eyes, and looking around, still half dazed, he continued: "I whistled at one o'clock, as is my duty, and it can't be much more now!"

The other man had, in the meantime, come close up to him. His broad fur collar, however, covered his face so completely that the watchman, still but half awake, could see but little, even if the rain and snowflakes had not made the night too dark to see anything.

"I did not ask you what time it is," said the gentleman, who was evidently anxious to get away, "but a great misfortune seems to have happened. In Neander Street, near a newly-built house, there is a man lying—dead, I think. I saw him as I passed by and called for you. You had better go to look. It may be a bad accident!"

"In Neander Street?" asked the man, now fully awake.

"Yes, yes! Near the corner! You cannot miss him!"

"A man, you say, and at this hour?" asked the watchman, eying the stranger suspiciously. "A man unconscious in the snow? Ah! dare say he is drunk!"

"No, I fear something has happened there!" said the gentleman, as he moved away. "I have done my duty. Make haste to do yours now!"

"You had better come along with me. How can I find anything in this darkness?"

"I have no time; besides, you cannot miss it; close by the new building a lantern is hanging, and it shines right down upon the man in the snow," and then the stranger, who evidently belonged to the upper classes of society, hastened away.

The man looked after him, shaking his head and grumbling under his breath. "I certainly had fallen asleep and dreamed I was at home, and mother was —and now I must trot. It is weather for dogs and cats, but not for honest men. It is raining and snowing at once—well, it will be a nice state of things to-morrow morning!"

He warmed his feet by stamping violently, and then set out for Neander Street, turning the corner. At once he saw the miserable, dim, flickering oil-lamp. As he approached he saw how the raindrops were unceasingly dashing against the sides of the lamp, while the snowflakes hugged the panes for a while, till they melted and fell to the ground.

"Here is the new building!" he murmured to

himself and opened his eyes wide, "but I see no man lying here. There is nothing here!"

Two, three times he walked up and down before the unfinished building, which was under roof, but still encased in its scaffolding, and diligently looked around.

"Eh! Has anybody fallen down here?" he cried hoarsely. No answer came, although he repeated his call; the echo of his own voice was all that came back from the empty shell of the building.

"A blackguard of a fool!" he exclaimed, in very bad humor, "he comes from his punch-bowl and his merry company, while we poor devils have to walk up and down the empty streets all night long. Little does such a man know how tired we feel!"

Thus growling and scolding he slowly returned to his post. Carefully wrapped up in his warm cloak, he leaned against the same familiar stone pillar, that sheltered him a little from the biting North wind; after awhile his head sank mechanically, lower and lower, and soon he was nodding again, overcome with drowsiness.

Gradually the rain ceased, but now the snowflakes came down, denser and denser, as the pale light in the East proclaimed the early dawn; but little of the snow remained. From afar the regular strokes of a church bell announced the hours; it struck five and no one yet stirred; the watchman was still standing and nodding at his post.

Slowly and wearily the gloaming increased; in the trembling twilight the snowflakes looked unnat-

urally large; and a raven who had roosted in one of the old trees, rose croaking, and with heavy wings sailed away in search of a warmer resting-place.

Now the watchman stirred; he beat his breast with his arms to start the sluggish blood into activity; then he yawned. "What a foolish trick that was in the night!" he said, as he remembered the warning of the unknown man, which turned out to have had no foundation. "A man, he said, was lying unconscious in the snow. This is a cursed cold, and, to be sure, just as I thought, as smooth and slippery as a mirror—however—I dare say, I had better —in this weather—yes, I 'll have to make the rounds. If the captain finds out that I have not been around once to-night,—there will be the Devil's Tattoo!"

With cautious steps he walked down the street till he reached the corner, and here he turned into Neander Street. It was a street like many others. The tremulous twilight showed here and there elegant villas. In the gardens that separated them from the road cypress trees were growing; the snow-laden branches hanging sadly down to the ground. Statues here and there stood shivering on their marble pedestals, and a pretty little group, representing Hans and Gretchen under an umbrella, which ordinarily served as a fountain, now looked absolutely suffering in this fiercely cold weather.

Once more the watchman was standing in front of the new building; the lamp had long since succumbed to the dawning light.

"There is no trace here of anything that could have happened," said the man, looking at a clear space, where the snow had apparently been swept away for some purpose. Unconsciously his eyes followed the tracks, which continued into the new building, that was but imperfectly protected by a few loose planks. One of these looked as if it had been removed. As he drew nearer he noticed a tall gray hat with a mourning band, lying close by the fence, in an opening which no doubt was intended to become a show-window.

"By the great Satan! This looks after all as if something had happened!" he cried, and picked up the hat, which was new and apparently uninjured. Then he bent over the window-frame to look inside.

Instantly he started back, let the hat drop from his trembling hands, and his weather-beaten, hard and rugged face looked as if he had been frightened unto death. "All Holy Spirits bless me!" he exclaimed, and then stared once more down into the deep excavation.

The morning light was barely strong enough to let him recognize the form of a man, who was lying stretched out at full length and motionless, on the ground, covered with blood.

"Great Heavens! What a calamity! My friend, if you have any life left in you, here is somebody!" he cried, and then he was frightened by the echo of his own voice, which alone broke in upon the uncanny silence. "He has had enough," he continued; "it is no use to try to help that man!" and retreated

into the street, casting anxious and bewildered glances at the darkness below.

Then he started on a fast trot. "I must report this at once! The stranger was right after all! The devil! why did I not look more closely! Well, a man cannot be in two places at once! Our duties are hard enough, and wages are wretchedly low!"

When he reached the nearest police-office, where he had to make his report, he candidly confessed that he had not believed the stranger, because he thought he was trying to "fool" him, and besides "walking on the slippery ice is mighty dangerous for an elderly man," he added.

At once the matter was reported to Headquarters in the city proper, while two policemen were dispatched with the watchman to the place where the dead man was lying.

The day promised to be a severe winter day, darkened by dense snow-clouds and swept over by fierce blasts and heavy, driving snow storms. A sleigh came dashing up, and several men got out before the unfinished house. One of them, a tall, intelligent looking man of some thirty years, whose rosy face was set in a frame of a full black beard, approached one of the policemen, and said: "I am Mr. Molitor, Commissary of Police; is the Justice here?"

"No," replied the man; "he has been here and is to be sent for when wanted."

"Well, then, let one of you go for him!" ordered the Commissary, and turning to the watchman, he

asked him: "You made the first report, did you not?"

The watchman nodded, and then most circumstantially narrated everything; dwelling very fully upon the hardships of his duty and the self-sacrifice he had made on this occasion.

The Commissary ordered the hat to be carefully laid aside, and then, taking a step nearer to the place where the dead man was lying, he bent over the opening.

"The poor man has fallen from a considerable height," he said, drawing back again; "from what I see, it was not an accident, for the wall here is three feet high and a man cannot well fall over it into the cellar; besides, the building seems to have been protected by planks."

"That is so, Commissary," said the watchman. "Last night it was all in order; I can vouch for that."

An elderly man, who wore spectacles, and who had come in the same carriage with the Commissary, now approached the group, and said:

"It seems to me advisable that we should all of us get down into the cellar, to ascertain the injuries received by the unfortunate man. I have an appointment in court at half-past ten and cannot stay long."

"Certainly, Doctor," said the Coroner; "we will do at once what you wish." Then he sent for a ladder and had it put down inside of what was to be a show-window.

In the meantime the Justice had also come and now joined the others.

The Commissary was the first on the ladder. With youthful elasticity he descended quickly, while the Justice and the Coroner followed more carefully. The space below appeared littered up with building material of all kinds. Already, while getting down, the Commissary had pointed at spots here and there, saying:

"Here is blood and here again. The poor man, in falling, must have knocked against some projections in the wall." When he reached the bottom, his eye fell upon a number of matches, that had been used and lay scattered about. "They look as if they had been used quite recently, in fact not many hours ago—can it be that they were the dead man's property?"

The Coroner, who had at once gone up to the dead body, made no answer. "That is out of the question," he said, after a long pause. "That man has used no matches down here; just look at these fearful, perfectly heart-rending wounds!"

"Is the man surely dead?" asked the Commissary, as he also came to look at the corpse.

The coroner merely nodded while kneeling down cautiously by the dead man. "Some hours!" He then said, "The *rigor mortis* is plainly visible. The injuries are simply fearful! The whole skull is crushed and the brain is scattered all over the cellar. He must have fallen with tremendous force," he added, pointing at the back of the head of the man, who was lying on his face. Then he gave orders to have the body turned, noticing at the time

that the blood-bespattered clothes showed the victim to have belonged to the upper classes of society.

At the moment when the pale, fearfully disfigured face of the black-bearded man became visible, the watchman, who had remained standing on one of the upper rungs of the ladder, uttered a short cry of horror.

All faces were instantly turned up at him.

"Well? Do you know the man?" asked the Commissary.

"I do," replied the man, who seemed to be beside himself. "I cannot be mistaken! That is Wigan, the great banker. That villa over there is his; he lives there in the summer. Oh, what a calamity!"

"Banker Wigan," asked the Commissary, frowning darkly. "The man who has the great banking-house in Kaiser Street?"

"Exactly," answered the watchman.

After a long pause the Justice said: "It is probably an accident."

The Coroner shrugged his shoulders. He had carefully examined, first the dead man himself, and then the spots of blood that adhered in places to the wall-projections. "The position of the body is a very peculiar one," he continued, "and all the circumstances lead me to the impression that the poor man cannot have accidentally fallen into the cellar. First of all: How did he get here, inside of the planks, with which the place was fenced in? Then, a falling man invariably stretches out his arms to

"YOU KNOW MORE! YOU KNOW IT ALL!"—*See Chapter III.*

protect himself; while this man is lying on his face, with his hands under him—and yet his face is not injured as one would expect! He evidently fell first on the back of his head and literally smashed it, as you see. I am inclined to think a dead man was thrown down into the cellar."

He paused a moment, looking intently at the face of the dead ma

"This is strange indeed!" he then added, in an undertone. "He has evidently been shamefully ill-treated while yet alive."

All the bystanders started once more and the excitement grew higher and higher.

"Why I think so, you ask," he said to the Justice, who had instantly knelt down by the side of the Coroner to study the dead man's face. "Nothing can be simpler! Look here; these broad, bloody looking welts across the face are evidently traces of heavy blows which the dead man received before he was cast down here, alive or dead—who will say? However, there are so many possibilities in this case, that it will be hard to decide, unless light is thrown upon the event by other witnesses. The poor man may, to suggest but one, have been trying to escape from a murderous attack; he may not have seen this ominous opening in the dark of the night, and may thus have fallen backward."

"Then you suspect a crime?" asked the Justice eagerly, his manly, fair features betraying deep inner emotion.

The Coroner gave no direct answer. "Of course,

we shall all have to wait for the autopsy, which will naturally be ordered, although the cause of death is patent," pointing at the broken back of the man's head. "But how death came about, no one can tell, as yet. This skull may show the effects of brutal blows, or it may have been broken by the sharp projections in the wall. The body must at once be sent to the Morgue." He looked at his watch. "I regret I cannot stay here any longer; however, you do not need my presence now."

The Justice bowed courteously. "I shall see to it, Coroner, that the body is taken directly to the Morgue," he added.

The Coroner took leave and somewhat slowly climbed up the steep ladder.

Now only the Justice found words to express his great sorrow. "There can be no doubt," he said in an undertone, "it is Banker Wigan. Such an excellent family! What a terrible calamity!"

"Did you know the deceased?"

"Oh, very well. We have played many a game of whist in his villa in the summer, but I cannot remember ever having seen Mr. Wigan out here during winter-time; and what could he have had to do here in the depth of night? His villa is unoccupied, and not even a watchman is kept there."

"Let us hope," said his friend, "that the autopsy and the regular inquiries will throw some light upon this mysterious accident."

The Commissary, in the meantime, knelt down by the body, and was at work examining the pockets.

"This is very, very strange!" he suddenly exclaimed, turning to the policeman, who was assisting his superior. "The deceased must have been a rich man!"

"Certainly," replied the other; "everybody in town will tell you how rich a man was Mr. Wigan."

"Well, then it is all the more remarkable that no money of any kind can be found on the body. There is no watch and no chain. He has neither purse nor pocket-book, and all I can find is this ring, with keys and a pocket-knife!"

"Here in his overcoat is a bunch of cigars and a double key," said one of the policemen, presenting the two articles.

"But that seems to be all," continued the Commissary, "no papers at all, no pocket-book—nothing. His wedding-ring, however, is still on his finger and a small diamond ring on his little finger."

The two men looked at each other in silence.

"This looks very much like a crime," said the Commissary. "These matches also confirm that idea; they have evidently been burnt recently. From what the Coroner says, the deceased cannot have lit them; death must have been instantaneous after those horrible injuries. Besides, no match-box has been found in the dead man's pockets. There must have been a second man in the cellar, and evidently at the same time when the crime was committed."

Here one of the policemen came up to him to report that he had found some tracks leading to the

back of the cellar. A lantern was brought down, but the traces were too indistinct to lead to any result. The broken pieces of mortar and lime had been so roughly trod upon, that the footsteps were soon lost.

The Commissary returned to the Justice and said :

"We had better go up again. I hope you had the street barred so that no one can come in ?"

"That is hardly necessary ; with the exception of a single man, all the house-owners here live in town during the winter months."

"That makes it all the more strange that this rich banker should have come to grief here," said the other, hurriedly mounting the ladder, after he had given orders that until the hearse should come the body should be left in the cellar.

CHAPTER II.

In a great city this event would immediately have attracted a crowd of curious people—here, in the suburb, not a single person had as yet strayed. The officials had the place to themselves, and the young commissary was thoughtfully walking up and down before the new structure, staring at the ground.

"Here are footsteps," he said, examining with critical eyes the traces left in the hard frozen snow.

"Well," objected the Justice, "we may have made the marks ourselves."

"By no means," retorted the former, shaking his head; "look at these traces that seem to come across from the other side of the street; they are certainly several hours old."

Suddenly he bent down and examined most anxiously a very clearly-defined track.

"Look here," he cried eagerly, "look what an elegant and characteristic foot! This gentleman wore double-soled boots, and the heels were high and narrow. His steps must have been regular and elastic, for they are all alike. And—what can this mean? I declare! Here, quite clearly, do you see? Within the heel a horse-shoe, ending in the shape of a heart! Even the little screws with which the horseshoe was secured in the heels have left their indentation in the plastic snow! And then look, close by, these coarse, awkward tracks made by boots with big nails on the soles!"

The watchman, who was standing near him, blushed purple and all over his face, advancing almost shame-faced one of his own clumsy shoes.

"That is probably my work," he said grumbling; "I was here in the night, but I never saw anything!"

The Commissary glanced at the man's shoes and nodded.

"You may be right!" he said, but the next moment, looking once more carefully at the sole of the watchman's shoe, which he held up for his benefit, he added, "And yet, no! You are not right! these tracks resemble yours, and here," pointing at the snow, "is clearly the impression of your shoe. Your soles

are fastened with nails; but several of these nails are wanting and this is distinctly seen in the footsteps. But these other tracks belong to shoes, also fastened with nails, but having a crack right across the sole. Here you see that very clearly! This man had evidently old boots on, that were in very bad order. Let me see your soles once more."

The man did so and the Commissary looked convinced.

"I see! Another man must have been about here last night, and I think later than the man with the ornamental boot heels, because the traces are not so clearly marked. It was perhaps colder by that time and the snow not so soft as before!" Then, fixing his eye upon this new track, he followed it till it reached the next house; then he suddenly called out: "Watchman, come here a moment!"

When the man had come up, the official pointed at some tracks inside of the plank fence, just before the open window.

"Did you get in here last night?" he asked.

"No!" said the man. "I was here this morning, but only a few moments!"

"No! no!" said the Commissary at once. "These tracks were made in the night, and look! here is the cracked sole again! How very deep the impression is! It looks as if the man had thrown his weight against the show-window—or could he have relieved himself here of a heavy burden?" He immediately ordered the tracks to be carefully measured, and then fell into deep meditation.

"I admire your sagacity," said the Justice, with well-founded and serious respect; "I should never have read in those marks in the snow, what you see in them."

"Experience is the best master," said Molitor mechanically. "I have seen no tracks made by the deceased," he murmured to himself.

He looked again and again for some time at the three different tracks which he had discovered; at last he called out: "Schmidt!" One of the policemen drew near. "Go down into the cellar and measure the boots of the dead man, but be careful!—or, better, I will go myself," he added, and in a moment he was down in the cellar.

When he came up again a few minutes later, he looked contented and said: "I was right; this is the dead man's own work. Now let us see!"

Attentive, with his head eagerly bent forward, he now stepped across the road bed, tracing the remarkable heel-mark backward. "Exactly!" he said, nodding his head; "the two tracks come in opposite directions across the street, but here they reunite," he said, as he approached an elegant gate of wrought-iron. On one of the stone pillars that supported the gate, he saw a porcelain plate with the words "Theodore Wigan." "This is, of course, the banker's villa."

"No doubt the footsteps continue inside," continued Molitor, who had tried in vain to open the gates. "I can see, from here, the traces of the strange heel by the side of the dead man's track.

Both of them are coming from the house towards us; no doubt the banker and the other man left the villa together. He himself went across towards the new structure, while the other first turned towards Louis Street, then seems to have re-considered and returned, crossed the street and reached the banker once more just before the unfinished structure."

He thought a few moments, then he said: "We shall have to inspect the villa. We have the bunch of keys. Schmidt took them from the body."

Just then the man came up from the cellar, and Molitor called him, in order to get the keys from him. They were of all kinds and sizes, so that the Commissary had to try a number before he found that the big double key, which could be folded up to half its size, was the house key.

Slowly the two gentlemen crossed the paved road, which led sideways from the front-gate around the garden, between the street and the house. It was thickly covered with snow, and the Commissary followed the two tracks with keenest attention.

"Evidently," said the latter, "the gentleman with the curious heels has gone first, for many of his foot-steps are partly obliterated by those of the banker, which are left perfect. The soles with nails have left no trace inside of the villa."

Thus they reached the house-door. The few steps that led up to it, showed likewise the impressions of both pairs of boots. The other end of the double key opened this door, and as they entered they

found all the shutters carefully closed. Molitor entered first, and his eye was at once attracted by a big, damp and dirty spot, contrasting sharply with the white marble floor of the hall.

"Here the gentlemen have shaken off the snow," he said, pointing at this spot, from which footsteps led to a door on the left. "If you will excuse me, I'll follow them and go in there."

The Justice had left the front door open, so that the daylight could enter fully into the hall, which had three other doors, while on the right a staircase led to the upper story.

When the Commissary opened the door on the left, a musty, unpleasant odor arose from the dark room. The contrast with the bright hall at first blinded the new-comers, and Molitor promptly produced one of those convenient matches that burn some ten minutes, like tiny wax candles. The gentlemen found themselves in a tastefully furnished room, with a table in the centre and over it a very handsome oil lamp. The unpleasant smell bore witness that it had not been long extinguished.

The Commissary's eye fell upon some silver candle-sticks on the richly-carved sideboard; he at once took one of them, lit the candle, and then went up to the lamp that had been lowered. He took off the chimney and passed his fingers over the wick.

"I was not mistaken," he said to the Justice, who had stopped on the threshold. "I thought the lamp had been still burning a few hours ago; the wick is still soft to the touch and, as you see, still blackens.

Evidently the gentlemen were in this room for some time; they have smoked their cigars here; we can smell the odor still. Here, in these two arm-chairs on the long side of the table, they sat opposite each other—here is the cup for the cigar ashes only half filled. No! Only one has smoked, for the cup stands close by him, and the ashes that are spilled lie all on this side of the cup."

He searched with a light under the table, but he found nothing. Nor could any other trace of the two men be seen.

"If these walls could but speak," exclaimed Molitor, looking thoughtfully at the many valuable paintings with which the walls were adorned, "we might learn something of the plot that cost the owner his life; but as it is, the mystery is deep!"

The two gentlemen now left the room and soon the house also, which they carefully locked behind them. When they reached the street again, Molitor locked the iron gate and said: "I will keep the keys, it may be that the judge in whose court this matter will be discussed, may wish to see the place. Now, to our tracks once more; this visit to the house has cost much valuable time."

With these words, he began once more to examine the footsteps most cautiously. Thus he had again followed them across the street, and here he paused, turning to the Justice:

"You see, sir, here the tracks part; the steps of the deceased disappear, but the curious heels continue for some distance farther. From this point,

therefore, the murdered man—I mean the banker, has ceased to move, at least I can find no further tracks, the shoes with the nails in the soles have obliterated all other impressions."

"It looks exactly as if a heavy body had been rolled about in the snow here," he added, looking almost anxiously at a spot which was nearly bare, and whispering to himself only. "Or should two persons have wrestled here? The snow crust is evidently broken up by force, and even the frozen soil is turned up here. But what is that?" he suddenly interrupted himself.

His eye had fallen upon a little slip of paper, which barely showed from under the light snow. He drew it out and found it to be a sheet of note-paper, covered with firmly written letters, that showed much character, but were partially effaced by the snow.

"Agreed. Will be at the place, sharp! Johannes," he painfully made out.

Then he dug farther in the snow and uncovered other papers; these, however, he simply handed to his companions while he read the first note again and again.

"Probably these papers fell from the dead man's pockets," he said meditatively; "or could the body have been lying here? It may be that the murderer knelt down here and eagerly searched his pockets—hence nothing of value has been found. These few papers the murderer did not notice, as he stole away with his plunder. Exactly!" he added with an air

of triumph, pointing at the impressions of the curious horse-shoe by the side of those made by common shoes with nails in the soles; "do you notice, Justice, that here the impressions are no longer as sharp as before; from which I conclude that here the murderer—for he and no other man had the extraordinary ornament on his heels—walked slowly by the side of his victim, who feared nothing. Then, when the deed was done, he no longer put his feet down regularly, and leisurely, but—as you see—helter skelter and in a great hurry!"

Just then the men reached the corner of the street and the Commissary let a sigh escape him.

"Here is an end of all traces. I presume Louis Street is much more frequented than Neander Street."

"Yes," answered the Justice; "some little distance down the tram-cars cross it."

"But see! here on the footpath that leads to the 'banker's villa,' is another track," exclaimed the Commissary; "somebody else has walked here," he added "this is the fourth track, which also must have been produced during the night."

Molitor looked dumbfounded.

"I do not understand these many footsteps in the newly-fallen snow, especially as Neander Street has no outlet at the other end, and thus can only be used by people who live in it. This is a man's foot, rather small and narrow, and not unlike the foot with the heart, only more elegant and more characteristic."

Once more, with his eye bent upon the ground, he retraced his steps back to the villa.

"Here, I am sure, one of the four men has been walking up and down, while waiting for some one. Does not this look as if a murderous attack had been prepared and discussed here, where no human eye was known to observe what was going on?"

"Then you believe that robbers murdered the banker?" asked the Justice.

"At least I can see no reason why the rich banker should throw himself willingly into the cellar; besides, the absence of watch and money confirms the idea. Did the banker have any bitter enemy here?"

"By no means! On the contrary, his future son-in-law, Mr. Dunsing, lives quite near here. Great God! What will he say when he hears of this terrible crime?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the Commissary eagerly. "Where does that gentleman live?"

"Some little way up Louis Street. Do you see that tall chimney behind those houses?"

"Quite clearly," was the reply.

"Well, that belongs to Mr. Dunsing's factory."

The Commissary returned to his occupation of the moment and soon came back to the steps, saying:

"It is too bad that all traces are lost at the entrance into Louis Street—the two gentlemen were friends, I presume?"

"Oh, certainly!" came the answer. "I can vouch for their friendship. I suppose I had better send word to Mr. Dunsing; he will be terribly shocked."

"If you permit me, we can walk there together," said the Commissary, who seemed suddenly to have come to a decision. He called one of his policemen, and said: "Schmidt, you will remain here; watch over the body and send me word instantly if the hearse should come during my absence. I am going to Mr. Dunsing's factory, where I can be found. Winer will measure this newly-found track in the meantime; do you hear?"

The man saluted, and his superior, courteously bowing to the Justice, went with him hurriedly down the street.

The factory stood some five minutes' walk from the corner formed by Neander Street and Louis Street; a high wall cut it off from the outer world. When the gentlemen entered the grounds through the iron gates, they noticed on one side the factory proper with its gigantic chimney, and on the other side, connected with the factory by a covered walk, the villa-like private house of the owner. The factory was a busy scene, full of life and activity; blackened men, carrying heavy burdens, were busily going to and fro. The peculiar whirring noise that came from the factory, indicated that the steam-engine was at work.

A man dressed like a laborer, stopped the two men, asking what they wanted. At the Commissary's request he showed them the way to the Counting Rooms, where they found the owner quite alone.

Richard Dunsing was a young man still, and in

his appearance not unlike the Commissary. But while the latter had blue eyes, speaking of great strength of character, coupled with uncommon goodness of heart, there appeared a peculiar, almost effeminate line about the sensuous, full lips of the manufacturer. His eyes, sunk deep into their cavities, and with unsteady, flitting looks, spoke of many nights spent in wild ways. Still there was something in his soft, pleasing features, that was apt to win womans' good will and mothers' tender care, but found no sympathy with maturer women and serious men.

At the entrance of the two gentleman, Mr. Dunsing rose and asked in an uncertain, slightly veiled voice: "What procures me this honor?" while he put up a double gold eye-glass. The Commissary noticed, however, that he was persistently looking over them at his visitors, and thought, therefore, that they were only meant to give the young man's appearance more weight.

"We come on a very sad errand, Mr. Dunsing," began the Justice, shaking hands with his host and then presenting him to the Commissary of Police. "I thought it my duty to inform you first of all."

"You frighten me! What on earth is it?" exclaimed Dunsing, turning paler and unconsciously, perhaps, watching the Commissary, who tried to read in his face what was going on in his mind.

"Your future father-in-law has had an accident!" the Justice replied, after a pause.

The terror of the manufacturer looked at first real

enough; he shook nervously and the last vestige of color vanished from his face, which never looked florid.

"What? Oh, that is impossible! You mean Wigan, the banker Wigan?" He uttered these words with great violence. "Why, gentlemen, I saw him only a few days ago, and he looked the picture of health and strength!"

His glances wandered from one face to the other, as if he expected the one or the other would contradict him.

Molitor simply shrugged his shoulders slightly and continued to watch the young man's features.

His companion, on the other hand, warmly shook hands with him, and said:

"We are all in God's hand. I presume Mr. Wigan was on his way to see you."

The Commissary saw the slight, nervous tremor that appeared once more around the corners of the young man's mouth, and something like a vague suspicion dawned in his heart.

"To see me?" Dunsing repeated in unnatural haste. "I do not think so, remembering that he always notified me of his intended visits, for fear of not finding me at home. But you torture me; what is it? Tell me, tell me, what is it that has happened to him?"

In a few brief words the Justice told him what had occurred.

"But that is impossible!" the young man cried, in his horror; "in Neander Street you say, and

opposite his own place—my future father-in-law? But pray, sit down," he continued, a little more calmly, "and pardon me for neglecting this simple duty—but you have startled me, overwhelmed me—"

He paused, expecting evidently some courteous little reply; but as nothing came to relieve him, he became embarrassed, rubbed his forehead with his hand, and nervously strode up and down in the room.

"Impossible! impossible!" he repeated. "What could have induced my father-in-law to come out to Neander Street at such a late hour of the night?"

"We have wondered as you do," Molitor said; "we hoped you might be able to explain the mystery to us."

"I?" replied the young man, in long-drawn accents. "I? Why, you see me as much amazed as any one can be!"

"Well, we all naturally presumed that Mr. Wigan was on his way to you when—"

"No! no! Then he would certainly not have crossed the street, around the corner," said Dunsing, violently shaking his head. "Besides, in that snow-storm he would assuredly not have come on foot all the way."

"Except that just at the corner of Louis Street the tramway cars pass by," remarked Molitor dryly.

But once more Dunsing shook his head violently.

"No! no! I know Mr. Wigan's habits too well! He

keeps a carriage and horses and would, no doubt, have used them in coming so far out of town. But, aside from all that—he is dead, you say, dead—?"

"Yes, beyond all doubt!" replied the Commissary in measured accents, "and also beyond all doubt, a great crime has been committed."

"What? Was he murdered, you think? You don't say so!" And now at last the excitement seemed to overcome him and he had to sit down on the turning-stool before his writing-table. For some minutes oppressive silence prevailed.

"Murdered!" he groaned again, and his hands fell from the face which they had hidden till now. "Great heavens! What a fearful word! The news comes so terribly sudden—you will pardon me, gentlemen, I am sure, if you see me undone, and I hardly know what I am to say to you."

"That does not matter in the least!" Molitor said rather sharply, for the young man's manner did not please him at all; "we hoped you would be able to throw some light on the event, since we took it for granted that the banker had met with—let us say, with this accident—while returning from your house."

"Oh, no! no, gentlemen, not the slightest idea!" the young man cried, rising suddenly again from his chair, "not the least! We were good friends, my father-in-law and I, but by no means so intimate as that. Especially during this wintry weather! He could not even know whether he would find me at

home or not! He never was the man who took so much trouble for nothing."

Again he paused and looked anxiously from face to face, as if expecting some answer; but soon the silence seemed to become unbearable to him and, rubbing his hands busily, he added:

"What a fearful calamity! And what will be done next?"

"Will you not come and look at the body?" Molitor asked quite unintentionally.

Dunsing's face flushed with evident horror.

"For nothing in the world!" he cried, so fiercely that the Justice also looked at him wondering. "You must pardon me, gentlemen," he then said, as if to make amends for the unfavorable impression which his words seemed to have produced, and after again anxiously peering into the faces of his visitors, "but I have an instinctive horror of dead people, especially when they are disfigured. I remember when they took me to the bier of my own mother, I struggled with all my might, until my father desisted, calling me a coward. It was not cowardice, however; you may believe me, gentlemen, I suffer from my nerves, and such a fixed, dead face pursues me even in my dreams. And then," he suddenly added, evidently under the impression of a new thought, "I think I had better drive to town at once. Poor Erna! What will she say? And the poor mother!"

It was the first time that Dunsing mentioned the name of his betrothed and alluded to the crushing

misfortune that had befallen her who was so dear to his heart!

Once more Molitor felt a vague mistrust creeping over him; there seemed to be so little real feeling in the young man's formal speech. He could not object to anything he was saying; but it all came forth so easily, so very superficially, that he felt he himself would not have been able to show such remarkable composure.

"Yes, you are right!" said the Justice; "besides, you will thus relieve us, as regards our most painful duty!"

"It is, of course, my duty," said the young man, looking at his watch. "It is ten now; before noon I can be at their house. Poor, poor Erna! How will she take it?" He rose and walked up and down a few times. Now, at last, he seemed gradually to realize the horror of the calamity.

"Do you know if your father-in-law had any enemies in this neighborhood?" Molitor inquired.

Dunsing looked at him in surprise.

"Not to my knowledge. Do you really think it was murder?"

"Certainly!" interrupted the Judge. "The banker's pockets are all stripped; there was neither watch nor porte-monnaie to be found, and yet, Mr. Wigan, no doubt, had some money on his person."

"Most assuredly!" Dunsing hastily broke in. "My father-in-law had his peculiarities, and one was that he was always afraid he might not have money enough with him, if anything happened. I would

bet that he had at least two or three hundred thalers in his pockets. Did they not find a red morocco porte-feuille? He always carried it in the left breast pocket of his coat."

The two officials shook their heads.

"Do you think he carried it as usual last night?" asked the Commissary, urgently.

"Most assuredly!" replied Dunsing. "You may rely upon it. I know the banker's peculiarities most accurately; he was very conservative and never deviated from old habits. But tell me," the young man began again, touching his visitor on the arm, "tell me, has nothing else been found on my future father-in-law?"

"Nothing else," repeated the officer, looking at him greatly astounded. "Will you express yourself more clearly?"

"Well, I meant, have no papers been found in his pockets; he might have been on his way to me, and he might have had papers intended for me—did you say there was nothing there to suggest the purpose for which he might have come to see me?"

Molitor's mistrust grew fast. He simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Do not misunderstand me," cried the young man, eagerly, evidently aware of the bad impression his words had produced. "I wanted to help you! As my father-in-law is also my banker, he might very easily have had something of importance to consult about. That was why I asked."

Just then there came a knock at the door. One of

the factory hands came to say that a policeman had just come who wanted to see the Commissary on business.

"Probably the hearse has come," said Molitor, and briefly bowing to the manufacturer, he went out, followed by the Justice. "Mr. Dunsing was very much excited," he said, as the two men were returning to the ill-omened place.

"He does not look to me as if he felt very deeply," replied the Commissary; "he has not made a very good impression upon me."

His companion smiled.

"Many say so," he remarked; "but when you learn to know Dunsing more intimately, you find him to be a first-rate fellow. The establishment was his father's before him, who made him study very hard. When the old man died, the son was a rich man; and you know rich young men must sow their wild oats."

The Commissary kept silence. Just then they turned into Neander Street, and, as they had expected, there stood the ill-shaped, black-curtained conveyance that was to take the remains of the suddenly deceased banker to the Morgue. In a few minutes the body was most carefully deposited inside, and the vehicle started. Molitor also took leave of the Justice of the Peace, begging him once more to send him his official report as soon as possible. Then he jumped into a cab and told the driver to follow the hearse.

CHAPTER III.

Rolf Molitor had seated himself in a corner of the carriage and lit a cigar. Sending the blue clouds of smoke out of the open window, he looked thoughtfully upon the scenes which he rapidly passed. He soon left the wintry solitude of the suburbs; the first long rows of palatial buildings appeared, and the farther he entered into the city proper, the more completely all traces of the severe winter disappeared. The busy, ever shifting crowds of foot-passengers, eagerly hurrying now in one and now in another direction, had long since effaced every trace of the snow on the broad sidewalks. But Rolf Molitor's thoughts were elsewhere. His pitiless profession had caused him to look into the distorted face of many a victim of murder; with rare success he, the young man, had pursued the traces of many a cunning criminal, but he could not remember that any similar event had ever made the same deep and absorbing impression upon him. He could not tell why, but he felt sure that the sadly disfigured face, with its mixed look of horror and of bodily pain, had taken a secret into the Unknown Land which

would tax all his skill and his energy to discover, and, in case of success, would also bring him a certain and unparalled reward. What occupied him just now most, was the contrast between the strange excitement of the young manufacturer, and the absence of all feeling when he received the first news of this appalling calamity.

He felt quite relieved when at last he left the brilliantly illumined and densely crowded streets of the fashionable city behind, and was driving along the high walls that surrounded both the largest hospital in the city, and the last resort of those who had in their despair ended their own lives, or been suddenly sent into eternity by the hand of the assassin.

The hearse drove slowly into the court-yard, while Molitor, with youthful agility, ran up the steps that led to the sombre room where the victims of suicide or of crime were laid out till recognized and claimed by their friends.

On the broad steps leading up to the principal door of entrance, two persons were standing, engaged in eager conversation. The Commissary's practiced eye quickly passed the familiar form of the silver-haired and venerable-looking steward, and a young, weeping lady in dark dress. He could not see her face, but he was confirmed at once in his guess at the purpose that had brought her to this dismal place.

He approached the little group, which remained perfectly unconscious of his drawing near. The

white-haired old man was all eagerness to console the weeping lady.

"Compose yourself, my dear, dear lady," he said just then, with a deep voice full of sympathy. "We must not always suppose the worst at once; it may not be your father's habit to remain out over night, and yet he may have spent a night in the suburbs. Your over-excited imagination, no doubt, has played you a bad trick, and if you will please go home now, you will most probably find your father in his accustomed place at table. Spare yourself the sad sight of the bodies in this room. That is not a sight fit for young ladies. And, besides, I can give you the solemn assurance that your esteemed father is not among the dead in the Morgue.

"But you were saying just now that that black wagon, which has just driven into the court, is bringing a new unfortunate?" said the young lady, with quivering lips.

Unconsciously she then looked at the Commissary, who was strangely affected and moved by the sight of the marvelously delicate profile and the touching sorrow that dwelt in the beautiful features, enhancing their charms and deepening the impression they made.

"That need not trouble you! That wagon comes every morning," the Steward continued, trying to soothe the girl's excessive grief. "You can return home, my dear young lady, and be at rest. I can give you my solemn word that your father, who, I hope will live yet many years by God's mercy, is

not among our dead. You should certainly hear it first of all, if such a calamity should happen—which God will prevent! What was your name, you said?"

"My father is the Banker Wigan!"

Molitor had heard every word, and at this mention of her name, an electric shock as it were, benumbed his whole frame, and yet he felt—what he had never known in all his career, full of startling, overwhelming impressions—he felt afraid, afraid of those dark-brown eyes, that were full of tears, and looked so despairing, so helpless, gazing as they were in his own eyes.

"I do not know," continued the young lady, after a pause, raising her hands to the white-haired old man; "I do not know why I cannot leave this place. I have never in my life been here. I do not know what has brought me here, and yet I feel as if all night long it urged me to come here. Papa was so strange last night when he left us, and when hour after hour went by and he did not return, fear crept into my heart. We had agreed that he should return at eleven, and Mamma and I, we were waiting for him in evening dress, to go to a party, and all the stranger it was that he should not come. The lighter the morning grew, the darker my heart became, till black despair seized it, and I could endure it no longer. What impelled me to come here I do not know, as I told you; but I feel in my innermost heart that the horror with which this place inspires me, is not a groundless feeling. I

cannot leave here till I know who the unfortunate man is that has just been brought here."

"This gentleman will be able to tell you," said the aged Steward, turning to the Commissary, but he stopped suddenly, when he saw how deadly pale Molitor's face had turned and how reproachfully he looked at him.

The young lady had turned so quickly that she just caught the look of dismay ; her lips began once more to quiver and her slender, delicate frame trembled so that Molitor hastened to support her and hold her in his strong arms.

"Compose yourself, Madame!" he said with gently tremulous voice, but he could not prevent showing in his features how fearfully serious the whole occurrence appeared to his eyes.

"You know more! You know it all!" she exclaimed, after looking anxiously in his face. She seemed utterly to forget that he was a perfect stranger and went on : "I pray, I beseech you, tell me, tell me all! Conceal nothing from me or you will kill me!"

Molitor had, of course, at once recognized in her the daughter of the unfortunate man, whose remains he had just accompanied to the Morgue ; and now he tried to evade her questions and to tell her all kinds of comforting thoughts, when suddenly a shrill cry broke forth and the poor girl sank, almost fainting, into the old Warden's helpful arms.

But her weakness overcame her only for a moment ; then she was composed again, and raising

her hands she besought the Warden to take her to her father:

"Do not leave me any longer in this uncertainty! I cannot endure it. It is sure to kill me!" she said sobbing.

The two men exchanged looks; then the old man said:

"My poor dear Miss, I will cheerfully do what I can for you; but first, my duty calls me to the inner room."

He freed himself with gentle efforts from the hands of the young lady, that held him convulsively, and availed himself cunningly of the moment when Molitor once more approached, to escape unnoticed.

"You are anxious about your father, I gather from your words," he said in calm, measured tones. "Was he in the habit of remaining out at night?"

"By no means," she replied, while the tears were running down her pale cheeks; "that is what made me feel so anxious. Mamma thought there was no reason to be troubled, but I could not conquer the anxiety that took possession of my being. Oh, I know something terrible has happened—I know it, for I saw the look you gave the Warden just now. Why will you not tell me the truth? the whole truth! It is my right to know it, and I demand it of you!"

She look at him with such an ineffably touching expression, that he drew a deep breath and then, approaching her quite near, and speaking in a low whisper, he said:

"Well, Madame, if you insist, your will shall be done. Your father has met with an accident—"

"Dead! dead! Why will you not utter it, the hideous, dread word, that destroys all hope?" the young lady cried out, while the dread certainty drove the last vestige of color out of her face.

The Commissary bowed his head and was silent. He could not face this boundless despair and invent a story which, in a few hours, would prove to be a falsehood; but his silence said more than words could have told the poor girl.

Erna Wigan remained motionless for a moment, as if paralyzed; but the next moment, after a few low sobs had broken from her lips, she also bowed her head, and whispered with expiring accents:

"Dead! Really dead! Poor, dear father!"

Her strength was on the point of forsaking her, when the Commissary came to her aid. At the same time the Warden re-appeared, looking very solemn. It was his sight, however, which instantly restored the young girl's strength; she hurried up to him, exclaiming:

"Now, sir, now you will not let me pray in vain any longer! Take me to my father! I know he is dead. I have a sacred right to see him. I pray, I demand it! Take me to my father!"

Once more the two men exchanged a look full of meaning. Then the warden seized the gloved right hand of the lady, saying with an unusually tender voice;

"Well, then, come with me, my child. I feel as if

I were doing wrong to take a rosy, unfolding life to this dread place where Death rules supreme, but I hope your loving heart will enable you to bear the worst. You must, however, promise me not to approach too closely! Death produces many sad changes in a face that is dear to us. Consider that well, my child!"

She understood him perfectly and apparently self-composed she followed him, while the Commissary kept at a little distance behind the two.

Thus with unsteady, trembling steps, and scarcely breathing, they crossed the court and entering another part of the building, they passed through folding doors and then mounted some steps. This seemed to be a hard task for the poor young lady, who had been deeply affected by seeing in the court-yard the hearse, and breathed so painful an "Oh, my God! My God!" that the old warden once more tried to dissuade her from proceeding any further. But Miss Wigan, at his first persuasive words, drew herself up and resolutely said:

"Ah, no! no! I am strong enough. I must see Father!"

"Well, then, let it be so," said the old warden.

He went up to an iron door on the left, opened it cautiously and then entered in advance of the young girl.

The room was large; the three or four couches which stood about, looked at the first glance like real lounges, and they were such with the difference only that no one who had been lying on them, ever

rose to life again. On one of them lay the body of the banker. The warden had thoughtfully covered it with a large dark cloth; the head was also concealed down to the eyes, to prevent the loving child from being shocked by the sight of the horribly disfigured skull.

For some moments Erna stood silent and motionless near the door; then a piercing cry broke from her lips: "Father! Poor, dear father!" and before the Warden could seize her, she had rushed forward and sunk down on one knee by the side of the couch. Raising both hands towards the body, she once more said, barely breathing, but in unspeakably mournful accents: "Father! Dear Father!" till the hearts of the two stern, strong men were moved to deepest sympathy. Hysterical sobs thereupon shook the delicate frame. "No! No! It is only a dream! It cannot be reality!" she cried, and was on the point of throwing herself on her father.

But the Warden seized her with his strong hand, and before she well knew what was done, she was outside again, and the old man murmured with deep emotion: "I did wrong to let you see it, but I could not oppose your prayer, my poor child!"

Molitor now also approached, upon whom she made a stronger impression than before, and said a few sympathizing words.

Erna Wigan, however, remained apparently indifferent, she had shed all the tears that Nature provided, and rigid pain now made her features pale unto death.

"I thank you," she said at last, with quivering lips. "You have done me a great kindness, for I decidedly prefer an end with horror to a horror and no end. My father used to say so. I can hear him say so now! And, oh, God! I shall never, never hear his voice again!" And once more the fearful grief seemed to overpower the poor, young girl.

Molitor, seeing this, said to her:

"Permit me, I pray you, to see you home; you need support. Besides, my official duties take me at once to your house—permit me to present myself, I am Mr. Molitor, Commissary of Police, and it will be my duty to investigate this mysterious affair, by which your father has been sacrificed."

There was suddenly a flash of wild fire in the eyes of the young lady, and seizing one of his hands, she cried:

"Yes, avenge my father! I have no doubt—he was murdered!"

And she spoke these words in tones of such deep and sure conviction, that they made a profound impression upon both men present.

"Be assured, Madame, we shall do our duty faithfully!" said Molitor, bowing deeply.

Then he offered her his arm, and thus supported, she left the scene of horror. But when she found herself in the open air, seated in a wretched cab and jolted on the bad pavement, all her composure left her and the poor girl broke down completely. Resting her lovely head on the hard cushions of the carriage, she pressed her handkerchief on the deadly

pale, tear-suffused face and broke out into low, spasmodic sobbing.

The tears of a beautiful young maiden are rarely without their effect upon a man's heart, but in this case they fell, Molitor fancied, one by one, hot and burning upon his susceptible heart, and he felt as if he ought gently to withdraw those tiny, white hands from the face which they were hiding, and to whisper words of comfort. He fancied he had not met the unfortunate banker's daughter for the first time, but had known her many a year. Repeatedly he attempted to speak, but not a sound broke from his lips; he could not intrude upon the sacred sorrow of the sobbing child.

At last Erna Wigan took her hands from her face, dried her cheeks, and stared at the little she could see of the outer world through the carriage windows covered with moisture.

The busy din and turmoil of the streets, however, seemed to cause her pain, and when unfortunately her look fell upon a hearse, covered all over with wreaths and garlands, and she saw within a richly ornamented coffin, she started back in horror, and once more big tears ran slowly down those pale cheeks.

"There also happiness goes to the grave, never to return!" she moaned to herself.

But her companion was too glad to notice that the spell was broken at last and he said, trying to console her: "We all have to leave our pleasant, cheerful life, but we have no right to complain, for

is not all and everything in our earthly existence subject to eternal change. And I cannot imagine that any one who has once passed through the painful parting with life, should ever wish to return to this earth, so full of illusions and disappointments. Not the dead we ought to pity, I think, when inexorable Fate summons them to ascend on high, but us, the survivors, who henceforth have to bear the burdens of life alone and unaided by those who now have found peace."

The poor, young girl drew a deep sigh.

"Poor mortals that we are! we think we have dominion over the whole creation, and we do not know that the simple kiss we give at night before retiring, may mean a parting for all time to come."

Suddenly, overcome with sadness, she paused again and her lips quivered.

"You are right, Miss Wigan," said her young companion, "but blessed is he who has thus been kissed by one he loves and cherishes—how fearful must be the curse of him who has parted in discord or hatred, under the influence of ill-fated passion."

He was evidently only speaking in order to draw her mind from the great, all-absorbing grief, which threatened to crush her; and with such a view, no doubt, he continued:

"I remember a scene which I witnessed professionally some years ago, but which has ever since continued to live in my memory as if it had happened but yesterday. I was passing, one fine, sunny morning in autumn, along the banks of the river,

when they were drawing the body of a poor women from the water, who had sought Death there. It was the old, old story of a moment's rash despair, that sought refuge from unbearable cruelty on the part of a brutal husband. And that same day it fell to my lot, as Judge, to see the husband brought before me, in the presence of his wife's dead body. Never in my life shall I forget the glassy, shy glance he cast at the lifeless body of her whom he had sworn to love, cherish and protect.

"'I surely did not want you to do that, Jenny!' he cried again and again. 'Oh, Jenny, why did you go away from me! Say one word, one single word! I cannot bear this! Tell me that I did not drive you into the arms of Death! Tell me that you have forgiven me; or else I shall become insane!'

"And he did turn insane; the memories of his dead wife let him find no rest upon earth! Now he has been standing before his Highest Judge—who knows what the sentence was?"

Poor Erna had become paler and paler; the whole delicate frame trembled with mixed horror and profound sympathy. She pressed her head deeper and deeper into the cushions, but said not a word.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Adelheid Wigan, the banker's widow, had heard the horrible fate that had befallen her husband through her future son-in-law, who had promised to hurry into town and to tell her all. Thus Molitor and his fair companion found these two upstairs in the luxuriously furnished house of the banker. There was hardly time for Molitor to introduce himself to the still handsome lady of the house, for Erna had, at her sight, lost the last vestige of composure. With unsteady, hurried steps the young girl came up to the lady, who advanced to meet her and, painfully sobbing, wound her arms around her neck.

"Oh Mamma, Mamma!" she cried, woefully. "What a horrible thing! Papa has been murdered! our good, dear Papa! This gentleman," pointing at Molitor, "was kind enough to let me see him—if you knew what a fearful place it is where they keep him!"

Unconsciously the young official looked with increased curiosity at the older lady's face, he was

afraid here also to meet with an outburst of wild sorrow, and was surprised by her perfect composure. She passed her caressing hand over her daughter's fair, low brow, and said comfortingly:

"My dear Erna, you must try to compose yourself. As yet, it is true, I myself cannot comprehend the whole enormity of the terrible misfortune that God has sent us, but you and I know that He is merciful and maketh all things work together for our well-being."

"Ah, dear mother, but this is too fearful. Dead! dead! and but last night he was here in our midst, well and hearty. I can yet feel his warm kiss on my forehead, before he left us here, and now he is lying cold and lifeless in that awful place—oh, mother! mother! I cannot bear it!"

Now her betrothed appoached her, and said a few words of comfort to her, and she really seemed to find consolation in what he said. With very strangely mixed feelings the Commissary followed the young man, as he took the fair Erna into a side-room; he hardly knew what the sight of this intimacy made him feel—he was certain, however, that he did not feel very kindly towards the young man. However, the lady of the house promptly led his thoughts back to his duty.

"You come, no doubt," she said, inviting him at the same time to take a seat, "You come, no doubt, in your official capacity?"

Molitor now introduced himself formally and added the usual words of sympathy.

"You will understand," she continued, "that just now we are still too directly bending under the weight of our misfortune to give you any precise information—Great God! it has come so very suddenly! so very unexpectedly!"

"And yet it is my painful duty, Madame, to ask you a few questions. It will gratify you to learn that energetic steps have already been taken to apprehend the criminal or criminals, who have so cruelly and prematurely ended your husband's life."

"You think, then, there was crime?" replied the lady. "Mr. Dunsing also mentioned it, but I could not share his conviction."

"And yet I must agree with your future son-in-law," answered the Commissary. "I cannot believe that it was an accident."

He then briefly narrated all the occurrences of the morning; but the longer he spoke, the more he admired the truly astounding composure of this lady, who had just experienced one of the most signal blows that fate can inflict upon us mortal beings. He could not understand—and he could not help being unpleasantly impressed by the strange fact, that not a word of complaint, not a murmur of pain, escaped her lips. And more than that, when he came to question her, she made answer and gave information in a quiet, dignified manner, just as if she were accounting for the sayings and doings of a third person, a perfect stranger. Whenever the young official looked into her still beautiful face, full of expression, he never saw a trace of tears, nor a

sign of such sorrow as a husband's sudden and tragic loss would be apt to produce.

"Then you think my husband was murdered by one of his companions?" she asked.

"I cannot doubt it; and my suspicions are so strong that I shall go directly from here to report to the presiding judge in person all that I have learned."

"And the calamity occurred near our villa, or just opposite, you say?" she once more resumed. "This is incomprehensible to me; it was so utterly contrary to all of my husband's habits, to visit this remote country house, which we use only in summer, during such an inhospitable winter night. I cannot imagine what could have induced him to take such a very unusual step."

"This is my impression, likewise," confirmed the official, looking at her, full of expectation. "I was in hopes of learning from you something about the persons who must have been last night in company with your husband."

But Mrs. Wigan shook her head, and the young man fancied he saw her lips curl with bitterness.

"I cared little for my husband's acquaintances. As far as I know, he had a very extensive circle of companions, who, however, never came to the house."

This sounded so harsh and almost repelling, that Molitor again looked at her marveling, and suddenly, within himself, began to doubt the heart of this fair but inapproachable woman.

"Then you have no idea, Madame, where Mr. Wigan may have gone last night?" he asked.

"Not the slightest!" came the cool denial. "My husband was not in the habit of sharing his secrets with me. As I told you, he was much absent from home!"

"And on that account you were not troubled by his staying away so late?"

"I would not say that. We were invited to the house of some friends of ours, but as they were in the habit of coming home only after the theatre, we had agreed to go there about eleven. But my husband did not come, and now, I must confess, a certain anxiety seized me, as he was generally a model of punctuality. When midnight came, I tried to console myself with the thought that some business or some newly-arrived friend might detain him. My daughter increased my anxiety by her impression that her father had looked excited or annoyed towards evening. This may have been the case; it is even probable, now that this terrible calamity has come upon us; but at that time I was too busy with other thoughts to mind it much."

"Then your apprehensions were aroused only when your husband did not return all night long, when he did not even return in the morning hours?"

"By no means!" came the cool but decided answer. "I should have had no way to become aware of his absence, as my bed-rooms are on this side of the house, and his in the other wing. It was only at breakfast, when the butler told us that my hus-

band's bed had not been used in the night, that we felt anxious. Erna, especially, was greatly concerned, and her excitement grew with every hour. I must confess, she apprehended the worst. About eleven she drove to the Morgue—had I known where she was going, I should certainly have forbidden her."

The Commissary bent his head, meditating deeply; then he asked once more:

"Your daughter, then, did notice a serious change in your husband; did she assign any reasons that you can remember?"

The young man thought the lady was about to give a quick answer, but she checked herself; not a sound fell from her lips, and only after a considerable pause, she said:

"I can really furnish no information, my dear sir; but, of course, you can inspect the rooms of my husband, and perhaps your ingenuity may obtain some light there. I, for my part, never knew much of his intentions."

The young man again felt that the lady might say more if she chose; he therefore added only these words:

"Will you finally permit me one more question. Was your husband in the habit of going out without his watch and with no money in his pockets?"

Mrs. Wigan looked at him amazed.

"On the contrary," she said, more eagerly than she had yet done, "my husband was peculiar in those very points. As long as I have known him, he had the fixed idea that he might some time or

other be found without money, when it was most important. He hardly ever, therefore, left home without a considerable sum of money; he generally carried a red morocco porte-feuille, which his daughter had nicely embroidered five years ago to show him her skill in such work."

"No such porte-feuille has been found upon the body," came the very serious answer. "And you think you are sure he had it yesterday, also, when he left you?"

"I happen to be quite sure about it," replied the lady. "Our sitting-room adjoins my husband's bedroom, and last night when dressing, he was walking continually from one room to the other, and thus I chanced to see how he drew the red pocket-book from the pocket of his house-jacket and put it into a pocket of the coat which he had put on."

"And a watch and chain he probably also wore?"

"Yes, and even a very valuable watch, a very rare heirloom—I could even show—but, no!—" she interrupted herself noticing the eager glance of the police-officer. "As I said, it was an heirloom, very large and old-fashioned, with a double case of very heavy gold. Both cases were beautifully engraved—on each a pair of cooing turtle doves. This costly watch and a very heavy gold chain he wore on the fatal day. He also had a valuable diamond ring."

"The ring has been found on the body," replied Molitor, who had noticed the sudden change in the lady's intentions with regard to the heirloom, but

who was too delicate to insist upon a revelation of secrets perhaps.

Mrs. Wigan then went with the officer through a suite of elegantly furnished apartments; and in one of the more retired rooms they came upon the young betrothed. Erna was resting, helpless and hopeless-looking, in a corner of the sofa, and covered her face with her hands.

A strange, overwhelming feeling arose in Molitor's heart. He felt as if he must rush up to her and whisper a few words of deepest sympathy into the ears of the lovely being who suffered such great and sudden grief. Then, however, his look fell upon the young manufacturer, who was sitting near Erna on a low easy-chair, with a face that showed nothing but discomfort and annoyance. Involuntarily he turned to the mother with a side glance, and the radical difference between the two women most forcibly struck him once more. Mrs. Wigan showed a composure closely approaching indifference, while the daughter was weeping and sobbing in her boundless woe and distress. For the first time Molitor felt a vague sense of mistrust creep into his heart; it roused in him something like aversion for the proud, beautiful lady; but the feeling passed away almost instantly as he saw her approach her daughter, and, affectionately bending over her, press a long, heartfelt kiss upon her forehead.

The search in the private house of the murdered man had no valuable result. Everything was in faultless order. There was a smoking-room, a

sitting-room for the reception of visitors, and a bedroom. The desk of the dead banker was down stairs near the localities of the bank itself. Here, in the upper story, not even a writing-table nor a private safe could be found. As Molitor was casting one more searching look around, he noticed in the smoking-room a photographic portrait in a rich frame, in which he at once recognized the features of the banker.

"My husband!" said Mrs. Adelheid, who had observed his taking the portrait in his hand and examining it carefully.

"And a very excellent likeness!" answered the officer. "Perhaps, Madame, you would be kind enough to entrust me with it for a little while—of course, without the frame. I fancy it might be of much use to me in our investigation."

"It is entirely at your disposal," said the lady, and Molitor slipped it out of the frame and put it in his pocket.

From the private rooms of the banker the Commissary next proceeded to the lower story, where the bank and the counting rooms occupied a large space. He left the two ladies with strangely divided feelings. He hardly could help shivering as he recalled the almost superhuman composure of the widow, which reminded him of Roman types. Below, he found that the terrible calamity, which had befallen their master, had not yet been heard by any of the many clerks and employees of the Bank. In the outer rooms, where the paying clerks

had their wire-screens and little piles of gold and silver, the usual crowd of the early forenoon was passing in and out in a continual stream. Molitor found here the two officials of the Criminal Court, which he had ordered from Seaton to meet him here.

Accompanied by them he entered the first room. A liveried servant advanced and led him, at his request, to the representative of the great banker. He had to pass through three rooms, full of busy clerks, before he reached the private office of the cashier. He was a medium-sized young man, who wore his ash-colored hair parted in the middle, and kept his watery blue eyes, with their somewhat vague look, carefully concealed behind gold spectacles. The pale, coarse-featured face was covered with freckles, and the thin bloodless lips were constantly endeavoring to produce a smile—an effort which at once strongly prejudiced the police-officer.

"My name is Slummer," he said, when the Commissary showed him his authority for the inquiries he wished to make. "I am the Procurist of the banking-house, the Chef's proxy. May I ask to what I owe the pleasure of seeing you here?"

His terror when he heard what had happened was evidently sincere; still, Molitor could not but notice the cunning, almost malignant expression that for an instant swept over his face.

"What! Our revered Chef has met with an accident!" he called out louder than was necessary.

All the clerks started from their writing and lis-

tened, full of curiosity. A gesture of the Commissary warned the cashier to be cautious.

"We had better avoid all excitement," he said, "at least, as long as that is possible. Perhaps you will be kind enough to go with me into Mr. Wigan's private office, where I have to make some investigations."

At first the cashier hesitated, but Molitor's earnest request overcame this feeling. Slummer bowed and preceded him to a leather-padded door. They entered a room with two windows, bright and comfortable; in the center stood an elegant oak writing-table, with a number of papers, all in perfect order, lying on top; near it a waste-paper basket, which had probably been recently emptied, as there were but few papers in it. In one corner of the room rose a tolerably large iron safe, resembling three other structures of the same kind, that had been noticed in the cashier's room. The latter was desirous of asking questions, but Molitor did not attend to him; he was anxious, first, to inspect the papers on the writing-table. He soon found, however, that this was labor lost, for they were all strictly business papers, and mostly unintelligible to an outsider. The cashier delighted in explaining the mysteries, and Molitor was grateful for it, although the information was rather urged upon him, even when not desired. Accidentally he also looked into the basket and at haphazard drew out of it a crushed envelope. He glanced at the banker's name, which

it bore, and suddenly his face expressed the most lively interest.

"Here is at least something!" he said half to himself, and then turned to one of his companions, asking: "You surely have the things found at Seaton, with you, Schmidt?"

"Certainly, Mr. Commissary!" was the answer.

"Then hand me the bit of paper we found in the snow."

He cast but a glance at the few words signed "Johannes," and saw at once that the handwriting on both was the same. The postal stamps bore the date of the preceding day; the letter had been delivered between five and seven; it had been mailed an hour before and at the most important office in the centre of the town. Nothing else in the basket proved to be of importance.

"Do you have the key to the safe?" asked Molitor, turning once more to the cashier.

The man hesitated again.

"It is the Chef's private safe," he replied, at last. "I have a key, but only to the outer door."

"Then please open it!" said Molitor, cutting short any further remarks.

The contents were disappointing. The secret books of the bank, as well as of the business proper, were there, but nothing of interest for the police. Molitor noticed that a private, smaller safe could be seen in the upper part of the great safe.

"Have you the key to this also?" he asked.

The cashier said "No."

"Then we shall have to send for a locksmith!" observed the Commissary.

But one of his men pulled his sleeve discreetly and whispered:

"There is a most oddly shaped key in the bunch we found on the dead man."

"You are right; hand it here, Schmidt!" replied Molitor at once.

The key did fit, and with a little trouble the iron door was opened.

Here also the contents were insignificant. The first papers the Commissary found were two notes made by the manufacturer Richard Dunsing, one for thirteen thousand marks, the other for seventeen thousand; both had fallen due the day before, and had evidently been paid. As he suddenly looked up, Molitor caught a peculiar, mysterious smile on the cashier's face.

"Was it Mr. Wigan's habit to keep notes that had been paid, here in his safe?" he asked.

Slummer's lips curled to a stronger smile, but his only answer was a shrugging of the shoulders.

"Well, explain, I beg," exclaimed the police-officer; "as far as I know anything of banking, such paid notes pass through the cashier's hands?"

"This is the case with us also," now said the young man, rubbing his hands and evidently gloating over some unintelligible triumph. "Nor can it be done otherwise in a business of such vast dimensions as ours."

"But why then should Mr. Wigan have taken

"OH, MOTHER, I CANNOT BEAR IT!"—*See Chapter IV.*

these notes into his own keeping, when they were made by his future son-in-law?" Molitor asked in the act of replacing the notes in the safe, when a renewed, mysterious smile on the cashier's lips made him pause.

"These accepted notes have not been entered, as other notes are," answered Slummer, "and I was wondering yesterday, for I had no idea that such notes were in existence, and yet Mr. Wigan never transacted the smallest business without my co-operation. When the two notes were presented for payment, the second cashier consulted me, and I thought it my duty to mention the matter to Mr. Wigan."

"Well, and what happened then?" asked the Commissary, expecting some important disclosure, not without oppressive apprehension.

"Mr. Wigan had them both paid," was the answer.

"Well, then it is all right, is it not?" asked Molitor.

"Yes; but he took at least ten minutes to consider," added Slummer with a malicious laugh.

"That does not concern us," said Molitor, and continued his investigation, after replacing the notes where he had found them. In his heart, however, he declared the cashier was an abominable creature, who had very nearly succeeded in strengthening a suspicion, that was a mere germ as yet, and evidently unfounded.

He came next to some newspapers, folded care-

fully together. A look at the date showed him that the first was perhaps half a year old, and that from three to four weeks separated the numbers; all were the same paper, the *Cologne Gazette*. He noticed in each number an advertisement surrounded by blue lines, and each time it was headed with the letters "I. W. A.," the same which he had found on the crushed envelope in the paper-basket, and each time a post-office was mentioned, which was very near Mr. Wigan's bank. It further stated that a letter with those initials was waiting for Mr. Wigan at this office.

There were several large sums of money also deposited in the safe, but the Commissary pushed them carefully aside to get at a letter which his sharp eyes had noticed. It was barely visible in its dark corner, and had been caught in a crevice. He drew it out, and was not a little surprised to find it bear the same three letters, "I. W. A.," which he had seen on the crushed envelope, and then again in the newspaper advertisements. Without hesitation he took the letter from the envelope, and at the first glance he saw that the writer was the same man who had also sent the other letter, that had been in the crushed envelope.

The letter was dated "Hamburg," about a fortnight ago, and ran thus:

"My Dear Theodore!

"As these lines will show you, I have disregarded your advice and come back to Europe. I do not

attempt to refute your arguments; a look at me will convince you that as far as my outward appearance is regarded, you would never recognize in me the youth of former years, and thus the Past, of which you alone know anything, has no terrors for me any longer. On the other hand, I obey an unconquerable longing to stand at least once by the grave that contains what was dearest to me on earth. I have as usual advertised in the *Cologne Gazette*, and hope, therefore, that this letter will reach you day after to-morrow, at the latest. On that day I shall come to your city and go to the Hotel Metropole, which has been strongly recommended to me. If you do not wish it otherwise, I shall wait for you there. You will be kind enough to ask for *John Grover*. "In old unchangeable love,

"Your JOHANNES."

Molitor had to read the letter over several times, and was unable to conceal a triumphant smile.

"This is certainly a most precious help," he murmured to himself, but when he once more caught the cashier's inquisitive look upon him, he soon had his features under control again, and folded the letter up in its envelope. Then he looked at his watch.

"I must lose no time" he said. "I herewith declare this private office, with everything that is in it, as seized by authority of the Criminal Court," and turning to one of the policemen, he ordered him to stay in the room till further orders. Care-

fully he then replaced everything he had found in the safe, locked it, and after he had asked Slummer to lock the outer door, he took the key from his hands.

"I have one more question to ask you," he finally addressed the cashier. "How was your Chef with the clerks he employed?"

"He hardly ever conferred with them except through me," was the answer.

"And did you ever have to complain of your employer?"

An almost supercilious smile played around Slummer's lips.

"I may venture to say," he replied, "that I was more of a confidant to him than of a clerk."

"Well, then, you had no doubt the best opportunity to judge of your employer's state of mind. Have you recently noticed anything out of the way?"

The cashier stared at him; he looked as if he had to prepare his answer. In the meantime the door to the adjoining room had been opened and thus the question was heard by a number of clerks. One of them, a bookkeeper, came up to say:

"For a fortnight Mr. Wigan has not been himself, sir."

"Ah! what do you know?"

Slummer interrupted him arrogantly. "Do not meddle with things that do not concern you! Mr. Wigan had for six months already changed so that his friends found it hard to recognize him. God

bears me witness! I have had to suffer much through him! Between us, be it said," he added in a low whisper, "at times I did not understand him! There were rumors that he had speculated wildly on Change, but I never believed that; our chief had too large a business of his own to engage in foolish speculations."

Molitor thought a moment and then asked: "Did he ever speak of trouble—or have you any tangible point on which we could form a theory?"

"No, there were only his whims," replied Slummer.

"Well, then I am obliged to you for your information," said the Commissary, and slightly bowing to the cashier, he left the room, paying no attention to the curious and frightened looks of the clerks in the other rooms, whom now at last the terrible news had reached.

It was by this time two o'clock. For a moment Molitor paused in the magnificent hall of the house, where marble pillars bore on high an exquisitely painted, vaulted ceiling. Then he turned to the second of his men, saying:

"Winer, I am going from here straight to the Hotel Metropole. You will instantly go to the nearest police station, and order me three men; with these you come at once to the same hotel and wait there for orders from me!"

The man touched his hat and started at once.

The Commissary went out on the street and beckoned to the near cabstand. When the cab came, he

jumped in, calling out, "Hotel Metropole!" and soon reached his destination.

CHAPTER V.

The Hotel Metropole was beautifully situated on the Square of the Empire, where splendid Empire Street ends, with its countless palaces and attractive show windows. When the cab with the Commissary drove up to the portal, the *portier* with his gold-headed staff appeared slowly advancing; his practiced eye had at once noticed the absence of all luggage, and shrugging his shoulders, he said negligently, "No room!" He must, however, upon closer inspection, have seen something to alter his views, for suddenly he hastened up to the door of the cab, opened it, and doffing his laced cap, he said: "Mr. Commissary Molitor?"

The newcomer nodded and, after the driver had been paid and was gone, he added:

"I wish to keep everything quiet. Only a few questions, my good man, in a private affair."

"Questions?" asked the *portier*, in rather painful surprise, owing to the horror such people have of the police.

"Well, yes! But you need not change color as if you were afraid. This is nothing but a private matter and I shall be grateful to you for such information as you can and will give me."

"I am at your service, Mr. Commissary; please come into my little box; here we are safe from all interruption."

Zealously opening a door, he showed the dreaded officer of the law into a small room, which bore over the door in gilt letters the words, "Portier's Office." Within, the usual furniture of such rooms; on a high desk the registers, sadly ill-treated by the travelers; here, a huge pile of Baedeker's and similar guides; there, a horse-hair lounge, on which the hard-worked guardian of the hotel no doubt snatched many a short nap. On one wall a traveler's map of Germany, with countless hotel cards; on the opposite side, the well-known rows of keys and compartments for the mail-matter of the guests.

"If I am correctly informed," Molitor began at once, "you have here in your house a certain Mr. John Grover."

The man assented eagerly.

"I should think so, sir; a gentleman, a gentleman; he has more money than he knows himself. He has three rooms *en suite*, the so-called Princes' Rooms. Only four weeks ago the Spanish Duke of Medina Sidonia had the same rooms."

"He is a rich man, then?" said Molitor.

"Well, if you keep your eyes open, you might see that. I was myself present when he gave the landlord fifty thousand marks in gold to keep in his safe for him—and then he said he kept about as much in his pockets for current expenses. I should think that showed pretty clearly he is not a poor man. But,

may I ask, Mr. Commissary, how you come to take such a special interest in this gentleman?"

"Oh, never mind—it is nothing special," said Molitor, with his amiable smile that criminals hated so bitterly, pulling out his cigars at the same time and offering one to his humble friend in the gorgeous costume.

"You know we have of late been made to suffer very much by some transatlantic visitors. You know in that other hotel, which but for the 'Imperial,' would be the first hotel in Berlin, they arrested only a fortnight ago, one of the shrewdest American forgers that ever came over here. This has made the police rather anxious about all specially eminent travelers who hail from the United States, and this is the reason why I would be obliged to you for such information as you may possess." With these words he accepted the match, which the *portier* had zealously lighted, and commenced smoking. "But, my dear Wilkes, why don't you smoke?"

The man, evidently flattered by the Commissary's knowledge of his name, smiled and said: "By your leave!" and after inhaling several times, he became almost eloquent.

"Indeed," he said, "Mr. Grover is a remarkably nice gentleman; he gives the best fees I have ever known in our hotel, and the bootblack says he gets his two marks every morning."

"By the way," said Molitor, turning round, "has Mr. Grover ever entered his name in the register? How long has he been here?"

"Well, I suppose about ten days," and, all eagerness to serve the Commissary, he opened the huge volume and hunted for the name. "Exactly! Here it is: John Grover, January 30th, from North America; resides in New York; came last from Hamburg. Rooms 21–23; passport and other papers complete."

The Commissary had looked over the shoulder of the *portier* as he was reading, and was once more struck by the peculiar, slanting handwriting, which had struck him to-day repeatedly.

"Yes," he continued, becoming quite familiar with the *portier*, "we poor people have to work from morning till night, get small pay and have to do things which we would much rather leave alone. But these gentlemen, like your Mr. Grover, they live just as it pleases them—if they are tired of America, they come over to us; amusement is all they live for. I venture to say this Mr. Grover does not know what to do with his money; he must be fabulously rich. Well, so much the better for your master, the proprietor—and I suppose the head-waiter also gets his share for all the little suppers and fine wines he furnishes."

The *portier* did not see the searching look with which the police-officer watched his features; he shook his head violently and said:

"No. Mr. Grover is an excellent man, as good as gold, but he does not know how to enjoy life. He is what we call a Philister; no suppers, no fine wines for him. He lives like a hermit, does not know a

human soul. In the morning he takes a walk; then he stays at home all day long, and punctually at ten o'clock he turns in, as if he were living in a little country village and not in a great capital. At nine o'clock precisely he takes his little cup of tea, and that is all."

"Why! You make me curious," said Molitor, apparently highly amused. He had stretched himself out comfortably on the black horse-hair couch and was busy knocking off the ashes of his cigar. "No intercourse, you say, this stranger has with any one, and only one walk he takes every day. What in the world did he come for, if that is all he means to do? If he does not mean to amuse himself here as we do, he must have other and powerful reasons that have brought him to us."

"That is what I said myself," confessed the *portier;* "for with the exception of one gentleman, who has only been here twice, not a soul has ever inquired after him."

"I suppose that was another yellow-skinned American?" asked Molitor, so carelessly that the *portier* wondered at his little curiosity.

"No! I hardly think so; I rather think he is one of our own men. I do not know his name, but I have seen him often pass our hotel. He must be another Crœsus, or whatever you call these millionaires, for yesterday he gave me a cigar, a genuine Havana! But he did not find Mr. Grover in."

"Ah! And then? Did this unknown gentleman wait for him?"

This persistent curiosity of the Commissary evidently amused the great man; he smiled superciliously and said:

"No, he did not wait, but he seemed to be put out and, in order to give you a full and faithful account of the whole occurrence, he wrote something on a card, asked me for an envelope, put the card in, and begged me to hand it to Mr. Grover as soon as he might return."

"And you did so.

"Of course. I did even more, for ten minutes after his return Mr. Grover came running down the steps and handed me a letter for Immediate Delivery."

"Ah!" said the Commissary, apparently calmly; "then you must have found out the gentleman's name, for, of course, he must have written to his visitor!"

The *portier's* swollen features became radiant.

"Upon my word," he said at last, "that I never thought of; but you may be right."

"And what was the name?" asked Molitor.

"Upon my word, you are asking too much, sir. It is not my habit exactly to talk about hotel matters with strangers, but as it is you, and you seem to be anxious to know it, I will tell you: It was addressed to a banker of our city, called Wigan; his bank is not far from here, in Imperial Street."

Molitor felt as if an electric spark had touched him. It is true he had anticipated most; but now the certainty that there was some link connecting

Mr. Wigan with this mysterious American had been established, and filled him with hope.

In the meantime the door had stood a little open, and Molitor had for some little while noticed that a waiter in evening dress, with a napkin on his arm, was impatiently waiting there, looking now and then curiously at the strange visitor in the *portier's* den. Now he came in, and at once the *portier* said to him: "This gentleman here," pointing at Molitor, "is very much interested in your Mr. Grover, who has the fine rooms in your story."

"He is at home," replied the waiter, looking at the Commissary with great curiosity; "he has had dinner as usual in his rooms, but he had no appetite to-day, and the dishes came out again just as they went in."

"And you now take a little walk to assist your digestion?" asked the *portier*, maliciously.

"Pshaw! we must do what we can to keep ourselves in order!" replied the waiter, still staring at the Commissary.

"Ah! You are waiting on the American?" asked the latter, indifferently. "I envy you. I should like to know how such an immensely wealthy man acts when he is alone, and our mutual friend here, the *portier*, tells me he is mostly alone. Only once, he says, he had a visit."

"What! You know that?" asked the man in evening dress, and drew nearer, feeling flattered by the politeness of this unknown gentleman. "I could not be there just then, or I should have liked to

make observations. But the two were so mysterious. They locked themselves in in Mr. Grover's parlor, and then they locked the outer door too; so that not a sound could be heard. They ordered a bottle of wine, and when I brought it, I had to knock half an hour before they heard me."

"Well, that was mysterious, I must confess!" exclaimed Molitor, laughing aloud, as if highly amused. "I wonder you were not afraid of entertaining Nihilists under your hospitable roof, and having the hotel blown up one of these days?"

"I must beg you, sir, to remember that we are a strictly first-class hotel," said the waiter, haughtily; "and our guests who occupy the Princes' Rooms are not apt to have anything to do with Nihilists!"

"Ah, well," laughed the Commissary. "I was just telling our friend here, that not longer than a fortnight ago, one of these great forgers was caught at the Imperial Hotel, in their best rooms. Now, he is kept in Number Safe, and turns out to be a mere tailor."

"Such things do not happen here!" cried the waiter, who felt offended by the free and easy manner of the Commissary, whose official position he, of course, did not know. "Mr. Grover is a mighty fine gentleman, and does not take up with the first-comer;"—Molitor could not doubt who that "first-comer" was—"and as for that one visitor, I only wish every one of us could be as well dressed as he was. The gentleman wore a full, black beard, diamond studs in his dazzling white linen, and a

brilliant in his ring—oh! it was divine!" And the youthful waiter turned up his eyes in ecstasy.

"What will you bet that I know as well as you do, how that man looked who has twice called on Mr. Grover?" asked Molitor, almost in jest. The two hotel-men looked in amazement at the likeness of the banker, which the Commissary had drawn from his pocket.

"Why, Mr. Commissary, where did you get the likeness. That is the visitor—to be sure! I could swear to it! Look, here is that scar near the left eye. I noticed it the first time I saw the stranger."

"Yes, indeed!" said the waiter, assuming a very different tone now that he knew who his new acquaintance was.

Suddenly the Commissary rose and in a tone of command, said to the waiter: "Go up and inquire if Mr. Grover will see me—or better, show me up at once, I am Police-Commissary Molitor and act in my official capacity."

"Yes! oh yes!" replied the waiter, turning deadly pale at these omnious words; "but Mr. Grover is thoroughly respectable, and it would be painful to the proprietor—and to the guests—if in our hotel—"

"Never mind that!" Molitor said, cutting him short. "Go up now and ask the gentleman if he will see me."

At the same moment a number of electric bells were set in motion in the vast building, and the waiter whispered almost anxiously: "It is time for

the *table d'hôte*. I pray you will follow me quickly, Mr. Commissary ; I have to wait at table."

Quickly the two men crossed the richly carpeted hall and were about to mount the staircase, when they were met by a bootblack with a number of boots on his arm.

" What on earth do you mean, Joseph, to come here with your wretched boots just when all our guests are going to dinner? Go to the devil!" At the same time he placed himself before the poor fellow, masking him as well as he could, so that the great personage who was just then coming down slowly, should not be shocked by the vulgar spectacle.

Unfortunately, however, the bootblack dropped several of his boots, one of which fell upon the Commissary's foot. He turned round angrily and was on the point of pushing the boot out of his way, when chance would have it that it fell with the sole up.

As Molitor saw it, a sudden tremor shook his limbs, and he instantly bent down to examine it. His keen eye had at once noticed on the moderately high and broad heel a brass horse-shoe, which assumed the shape of a heart. Without minding the amazed looks of the waiters, he picked it up and now saw that two very small metal-screws fastened the horse-shoe to the heel. At once he turned to Boots and asked :

" Whose boot is this?"

His excitement was so great that his voice was hoarse and indistinct.

"Let me see," said the man. Pointing at the number that was marked on it with chalk, he added: "Number Twenty-one! That is the rich gentleman from America!"

"Mr. Grover!" added the waiter in his impatience.

"May I beseech you, Mr. Commissary! here goes the second bell, and I ought to be at my place in the dining-room."

Instead of replying, Molitor simply uncovered the insignia of his office and said to the frightened servant:

"I order you, in the performance of my duty, to consider these boots as in the keeping of the Court, and not to return them to Mr. Grover!"

He paused a moment, for just then he saw below the hemlets of the two policemen appear, whom he had ordered to meet him at the hotel. He called one of them up and gave him the mysterious boots, to be kept carefully.

"When did you clean these boots?" he then asked Boots.

"This morning; they were in a horrible condition."

"Very muddy, you mean?"

"Yes, terribly muddy. But the foreign gentleman had a very peculiar look, too, when he came home last night."

"Ah! Mr. Grover was out during the night?"

The waiter ventured once more to hasten the steps of the two speakers, but Molitor reproved him angrily:

"I command you to stay here! I tell you once more, I am here in the performance of my duty!"

Quickly resolved, he took all three men down with him to the *portier's* little room.

The whole scene had taken place so suddenly and so briefly, that none of the guests who were coming down on their way to the two dining halls had noticed the little group of policemen, although several were in uniform.

The *portier* opened his eyes wide when he saw Mr. Molitor come back in such company.

"Ah! Great Heavens!" he cried, stammering; "I shall have to go for the Boss. Mr. Commissary, for God's sake, no racket! That would be too dreadful!"

"Never mind!" the Commissary silenced him. "I must clear up your contradictory statements. You told me a little while ago Mr. Grover was a pattern of punctuality and went to bed when the bell struck ten. Now Boots comes and reports that Mr. Grover came home last night very late and in a horribly muddy condition."

The *portier* shook his head.

"I know nothing of that," he answered. "But, wait a moment—yes!—now I remember. Mr. Grover did go out yesterday, about seven o'clock; but I thought it was only to take a little walk. After that I was called upstairs and kept there for an hour or more; but you, Joseph," he turned to Boots, "you were on duty last night; when did Mr. Grover return?"

"Oh, yes! I saw him!" eagerly replied the servant, proud of having something to report. "It was about two o'clock. I had come on duty at midnight, and had fallen fast asleep; then the bell rang and roused me, and when I opened the door, a gentleman was standing there. But, Great Heavens! How he looked! I did not recognize him at first; his face also looked so different. And then,—" he hesitated, casting shy looks at the police-officer, "I thought I saw blood on his clothes."

Not a muscle quivered in the Commissary's face, although his heart was near bursting. Could he have been so signally fortunate? Could he have discovered the author of last night's crime in so short a time?

"Go on!" he said, forcing himself to appear calm. "You say he was bleeding?"

"Not exactly bleeding; he looked blood-stained —but, yes,"—Joseph added, while his confusion increased visibly, "he had a handkerchief twisted around his left hand and said he had fallen from the tramway in the night, and I was going to fetch a doctor."

"Well, did he let you go?" inquired Molitor.

"Oh, no! He took his porte-monnaie out with his right hand and gave me half-a-crown. 'Americans,' he said, 'are not as delicate as Germans; that little hurt was no matter to him; he could attend to that himself.' Only he told me not to talk about it, because he hated all vile gossip. I was tired, and so I was glad he did not send me

out. I took a light and showed him to his room and then I lay down again."

"But what is all this about?" asked the *portier*, and the waiter also looked deeply concerned.

"I hope Mr. Grover has not gotten into trouble?"

"Will you have the goodness not to meddle with other people's business!" the Commissary curtly said. "Nothing will happen that concerns you; so much I can promise you. Rather, tell me if you ever saw Mr. Grover excited?"

"Not that I remember," was the answer.

But the *portier*, frightened by the officer's stern tone, reflected a moment, and then added:

"Once I thought he was, that was the day before yesterday. Mr. Grover was coming home from his usual walk, he had been in the Park, and when he came in, I thought he looked strangely excited."

"Is that all?" asked Molitor, and when the *portier* said "Yes!" he turned to the waiter, saying:

"And you? Try to remember! You cannot get away from here till you do!"

"But what am I to remember? I know nothing."

"Try, I tell you, try!" urged the officer, who was in a state of feverish excitement. "You told me of that meeting between Mr. Grover and another gentleman—how did they part?"

"Well," replied the waiter, drawing back a step from the fire of the Commissary's piercing eyes, "they looked both very serious. Mr. Grover seemed to be rather cast down; but we have so much to remember, I did not notice very particularly."

"For the present, gentlemen, you will please observe the most absolute silence; not even your master, the proprietor, must hear a word of all this; do you understand? It may be an unfounded suspicion. In ten minutes I shall know what is to be done." He then turned to Boots and ordered him to show him Mr. Grover's rooms. "Now we will deprive the dining-room no longer of this indispensable waiter's presence. You can go! One of my men will remain in the *portier's* room below. You, Winer, and the other two constables, will come up with me and remain stationed at the door till further orders."

Molitor had to pass the half-open door of the dining-room, where all the din and turmoil of nearly a hundred guests arose, while everybody seemed to talk and the servants with their silver waiters were perpetually running to and fro. But he gave only a single glance to the festive scene, and then ran rapidly up the thickly-carpeted steps to the second story. The servant was standing at the door of Mr. Grover's rooms, and Mr. Molitor knocked. No answer came. He knocked once more, and when this also remained unanswered, he resolutely opened the door and entered. The room was empty; it was probably the ante-room of the apartment, a moderately large room, with one window, but richly furnished. Here he stationed the constables and then knocked at the opposite door. A deep, sonorous "Come in!" was heard, and drawing himself up to his full height, Molitor entered into the presence of Mr. John Grover.

CHAPTER VI.

A very tall, broad-shouldered man of about forty was John Grover, who arose from a comfortable arm-chair near the window, to receive the unexpected visitor. Molitor's first impression of the American was favorable; his face was pale, it is true, and the expression was not peaceful, but although the eyes lay far back in their cavities, they were large and black and spoke of pride and resolute courage. The features were boldly carved; the noble, Roman nose harmonized with the haughty lips. The whole face was eloquent with manly virtue, courage and love of truth; only around the corners of the mouth, where the dark, but reddish beard did not conceal them, there was a mere shade of womanly gentleness visible, especially when the stranger was off his guard.

He looked in great surprise at the intruder and his surprise became indignation when the latter introduced himself and proved his identity by exhibiting his card.

"This is indeed a strange pleasure," he said.

Mr. Molitor looked up astonished, for he had not

expected the American would speak German so well and so fluently.

"I am greatly pained," he said, "to have to molest you, but in our city certain forms are prescribed in our intercourse with foreigners, which have to be complied with—in this case, evidence of the identity and the hailing-place of the visitor. We make, of course, distinctions in different cases, and on that account I have been ordered, avoiding all publicity, to wait on you here at your hotel, and to beg you, as a mere ceremony, to let me see your passport and other papers."

A slight smile was playing around the foreigner's lips as he heard the request, which evidently concealed an order. He rose from his seat and thus enabled the police-officer to see that Boots had informed him correctly. Mr. Grover's left hand was in a thick bandage.

Mr. Grover disappeared in the adjoining room, leaving the door open, however. Instantly, almost, he called out:

"Mr. Commissary, may I trouble you to come this way?"

Molitor hastened to follow him. He found the American bent over one of their colossal trunks; he had opened it and was trying to lift the top receptacle.

"I am a little awkward," he said to the officer; "I have hurt my hand and cannot make much use of it. Would you be kind enough to help me a little?"

The Commissary went up to him and with ease

took out the upper compartment, which was filled with costly linen.

"I am much obliged to you! Now we can easily get at the necessary papers," replied the American, impatiently turning over with his right hand a number of papers which lay at the top. "Ah! here is my passport; here are my other papers, the offices I have held; and here the personal recommendation of our Secretary of State, if you will be pleased to examine them! But how awkward I am to-day!" he suddenly interrupted himself.

In his eager efforts to find the papers and to arrange them with only one hand, he had upset a file of newspapers, which fell to the ground after fluttering here and there. Mr. Molitor courteously stooped down to gather them, and he had nearly finished the task when his eye fell by mere chance upon an advertisement in one of the papers, that was marked with a red line around it, and he read:

"*I. W. A. Letter, Post-office, Chicago.*"

The blood rose to his head at this unexpected discovery. But he controlled himself by a supreme effort; with a perfectly unruffled face he handed the papers to their owner. Only one other glance he gave to the paper, skilfully turning it so that he could see the heading—it was the *New York Herald.*

"I thank you! I thank you!" said Grover, carefully replacing the papers with his right hand, "this might stay here till later. Great Heavens! I never knew how dependent we are on the use of our left hands." Then he returned to the sitting-

room, carrying his passport and others papers in his hand.

"You have injured your hand, you say?" asked Mr. Molitor, after the two men had taken seats again, facing each other.

"Oh! it is a mere trifle." explained Grover indifferently. "I jumped from one of your tram-cars and fell. I had been absorbed in thought when I reached the station, and I jumped off sideways, instead of with the horses. The consequence was that I fell, and my left arm, close to the wrist, knocked against the iron steps, while the car was rolling away; but, of course, it amounts to nothing."

While he was speaking, the Commissary had apparently glanced but superficially at his papers, though in reality he had examined them most minutely. Now he returned them to the owner with a courteous bow and the words:

"Many thanks; everything is in perfect order. Only I do not see the place of your birth mentioned anywhere," he added, casting a searching look at the stranger.

"I have, properly speaking, no place of nativity—I was born in the primitive forest."

"Is it possible! You are a native American?" asked Molitor, still smiling courteously. "I hoped to meet in you a German-American, for, to tell the truth, you speak an admirably pure German. You must have been here often to acquire such a perfect command over our language."

"No, by no means! This is my first visit to Ger-

many, and all I learnt, I acquired in America. You know German is spoken there by many millions of men."

"Well, I was told native Americans do not like Germany; but that does not matter—" He suddenly broke off when he saw Mr. Grover tremble and then seize his left hand by stealth. "You ought really permit me to warn you about your hand. Such cases are apt to look mere trifles and then being neglected, to become very serious. You ought to attend to it. We have just to-day had a very sad accident that makes us all more anxious; one of our most highly-esteemed fellow citizens, Banker Wigan, has lost his life in a very distressing manner."

With piercing looks, rendered keener by growing suspicion, he was watching every line in the face of the American, and thought he noticed that the unexpected mention of the name had made him tremble for an instant.

"I just met, before coming here, a friend of mine, who told me that the great banker also may possibly have met his death by incautiously jumping from a car. The accident occurred in one of the suburbs; in Seaton, they say."

Although the Commissary had purposely spoken slowly, to have time to watch the traveler's expression of face, he had to see very soon that his efforts were in vain. The transient emotion which he fancied he had read in Mr. Grover's trembling lips, had passed away as promptly as it had come. He

looked like a man who from politeness listens to what another has to say, but who takes no interest in it, and would be glad if the visitor would leave.

"I am much obliged to you for your interesting communication, Mr. Commissary, and perhaps I shall follow your kind advice."

"I must, however, have seen you before, somewhere," continued Mr. Molitor, without taking the hint of the American, who evidently wished to be left alone.

"That is very probable," was his reply, "my only amusement, while I have been in your good city, has been to walk about in your really magnificent park."

"And, if I am not mistaken, I have even met you in company with this very Banker Wigan—Great God! now only it occurs to me how I would have blundered if I mentioned that worthy man's death without preparation to you, and—"

"No! no!" said Mr. Grover, shaking his head. "I think you must have been mistaken about the person; I do not know your Banker Wigan. I have, of course, never walked with such a man in the park, although it so happens that I was at that place on the same day which you mention."

"You really do not know Banker Wigan?" continued Molitor, and the courteous smile never left his lips. "Pardon me, if I try to unravel a little mystery, and pardon me especially, if I trouble you with these apparently idle questions—but Banker Wigan must surely have been known to you, since he paid you a visit here, at the hotel."

The American suddenly looked very serious and grave; he said very haughtily:

"And have you orders to subject my going out and coming in to such minute investigation?"

"Oh, no!" said the Commissary, trying to soothe the American's rising temper; "the way I came to know it was this: I was speaking with the *portier* of the calamity, which has cost Banker Wigan his life, last night, and then he mentioned the fact that the banker had been here only yesterday afternoon, and had asked for you, without, finding you at home."

"An error on the part of the *portier*, I am sure!" replied Mr. Grover with repelling coldness in his voice; and at the same time he rose from his chair, as if to indicate that he did not wish to continue the interview. "I can only repeat that I do not know a Banker Wigan!"

"And yet, at the risk of displeasing you, I must differ from you," replied the official, now also assuming a more formal tone; "you cannot but know Banker Wigan, as you sent only yesterday, by means of the *portier*, a letter for immediate delivery to this same gentleman!"

A dark wave of blood seemed suddenly to rise into the face of the American, and his composed, haughty expression vanished, giving way to an almost anxious look; but only for an instant. Then he recovered his self-control and almost arrogantly he asked:

"By what right, sir, do you intrude upon my private business?"

"By the right of my office, in the pursuit of a painful but imperative duty!" was the prompt and decided answer. "Perhaps you will appreciate both my right and my duty all the better, when I tell you that the banker has been found dead this morning."

The last words were uttered with great energy. Their effect was evidently deep; the American changed color repeatedly, and drew his breath with difficulty. For a minute silence reigned in the room; the two men were measuring each other, as if preparing for a combat on which life or death depended.

"And you dare tell me that?" at last almost shouted Mr. Grover, stamping with his foot in his rage. "I repeat, what have I to do with this Mr. Wigan? Well, I now remember—that gentleman had offered to transact some money-business for me; I own a large amount of land in Pennsylvania and want to get rid of it. He offered to procure me a buyer, and called upon me during my absence."

"After he had, a week ago, spent an hour with you here in conversation," supplied the Commissary.

"But," continued the traveler, paying no attention to his visitor's remark, "he did not find me in. I thought, however, his offer was a good one, and, as I intend to leave to-morrow or the day after, I sent him that letter for Immediate Delivery, to lose no time."

"What did you say in that letter?"

"Sir!" cried the other, now thoroughly angered, "you ask cursed bold questions. Is it customary in Germany to examine travelers in this way, like school-boys?"

"You forget, sir, that I am here in the performance of my duty," replied Molitor, unmoved by the other man's insolent words. "I cannot even see how my harmless question can possibly offend you?"

The American still looked furious, but he evidently tried to control himself. Then he turned round and walked a few times up and down in the room.

"Well," he said, roughly, stopping again, "if you must know it, I invited the banker to call on me as soon as possible."

"Did he come?"

The traveler shook his head.

"No," he said, curtly. "I never saw that gentleman again. Now you choose to tell me that he has met with an accident."

"Murdered, I think I said," answered the Commissary. "Did you really not know before that Mr. Wigan had a villa in Seaton?"

"How should I know? You certainly ask curious questions."

"Simply because I thought, after having spent an evening as a guest at a house, you would know to whom it belonged."

"You surely do not mean to say that I spent last night at that villa in Seaton?" cried the American, in an irritated voice.

And yet Molitor thought he could perceive a secret horror in the man's voice.

"Yes, I must insist upon it," he said with emphasis. "I have absolute proof of it, that you have been in company with the banker at his villa and have left it together with him. Now, the banker has met with the accident—if you prefer that name—immediately in front of that house!"

"Sir! sir!" shouted the American once more in great excitement. "Why do you tell me all that? What the devil can you mean? You come to me apparently in all simplicity, I treat you as an honorable gentleman, and now you dare, of a sudden, to suspect me in this unpardonable manner!"

"I cannot imagine by what words I could have suggested even any suspicion on my part, Mr. Grover," replied the Commissary with great dignity. "Do you not know that the angry man is always in the wrong? I am here in my official capacity, and I must request, most earnestly, that you will answer my questions like a man. The case that brings me here is a very sad case, and you will permit me to add, that it is to your own interest to help us in unraveling a mystery, in which, by accident or for other reasons, you have played a prominent part. Once more I ask, will you admit having met the banker last night in his villa?"

"No!" said Grover peremptorily, throwing himself, with both hands in his trouser's pockets, into an arm-chair. "It is nonsense, what you are talking!"

"Will you deny even if I prove to you that you were there?"

"You cannot do that!" cried the other angrily.

"Yes, I can, for the traces left by your boots have betrayed you!"

"You do not say so," sneered the American, whose features, however, began to quiver and to tremble with inner excitement.

"Do not forget that you are in Germany!" admonished the police-officer. "Every country has its own ways and methods—and also its fashions. For instance: a heel, with a horse-shoe inserted, such as the boots which you wore last night can show, may not again be found in this whole large city. I have your boots and, as I said, the track left by your heels in the soft snow and muddy soil, is undeniable evidence."

"Ah! that is cunning!" said the traveler, in whose voice the Commissary thought he now discovered a certain weakening and loss of spirit. "I admire your ingenuity; you will rise high in your profession. Perhaps you will say next that I have murdered the banker?"

"I do not say so in the least, although I must confess that your utterly useless denial is calculated to create suspicion."

And when the other man gave no answer, but merely looked daggers at his visitor, the latter added:

"You injured yourself in jumping from a tramway car?"

John Grover merely nodded.

"May I ask on which line it happened?"

"That I don't know!" was the curt answer.

"You must know it, for people do not jump on board a car without knowing in what direction it is moving, especially at such a late hour at night."

"But I do not know it. Leave me alone with your questions!"

Molitor had gradually grown very serious, and his features showed that he had come to a conclusion.

"You do not know," he said after a pause, "how grievously you injure yourself by this constant denial. To help you in realizing this, I will tell you that I know the nature of your relations with Banker Wigan—"

Here he stopped suddenly, for the change in the American's face was so sudden and so fearful, that he was startled. The man's face turned deadly pale, of a sudden; his eyes projected as if they were about to burst, and an effort to rise ended in his sinking back into the soft cushions of his easy-chair with a long-drawn sigh.

"What can you know?" he asked at last with a hoarse voice.

"At least this, that you have for weeks corresponded with Banker Wigan."

"That is not true!" cried the American.

"Yes, it is so. You have also written to him from the Alster Hotel in Hamburg."

"You will have to prove that!"

"PERFECT CONFUSION REIGNS IN THE DEPARTMENT."—*See Chapter VIII.*

"Nothing easier, for the letter is in my hands! I also know from it that you did not tell me the truth just now, when you asserted that you had never been in Germany. On the contrary, your letter says distinctly, that you are returning to Germany, although you are liable to be held responsible for some early transgression."

"I admire your ingenuity once more," sneered Mr. Grover, crossing his legs in apparent indifference, "but it is a pity that no such letter was ever written."

"You will be convinced of the contrary," calmly but firmly broke in Mr. Molitor. The handwriting on the envelope of the Immediate Delivery letter, the letter itself, which was found in the pockets of the deceased, and the consent to a meeting at Seaton last night—all speak against you. The writing is, moreover, the same in which your name is entered in the hotel-register."

"All that is a mistake—nothing but delusion," said the American, getting nervous. "There are no doubt hundreds of similar handwritings."

"But it is a rare occurrence that people correspond in cypher and inform each other by 'Personals' in the newspapers, when they have sent a letter. I cannot be mistaken, I think, if I affirm that you always apprised the banker by an advertisement in the *Cologne Gazette* when you had written to him, while you were enlightened in like manner in the columns of the *New York Herald*."

"That is absurd!" shouted Grover: but he turned

so pale at the same time that the words of the young official had evidently wounded him deeply.

"You sign those letters 'Johannes,' a name which is certainly not often met with in America," the Commissary continued. "Will you condescend to acknowledge them, or must I remind you of the letters 'I. W. A.?'"

"Sir!" cried the American, jumping up as if moved by a spring and staring at Molitor with wide-open eyes. "What spirit moves you? How do you know?"

He was evidently overcome; his consternation was unmistakable. But hardly had the sound of his words passed away, than he repented; he bit his teeth and made a supreme effort to appear calm.

"I repeat, Mr. Commissary, I am an American citizen, and I cannot permit you to doubt one word I say. You are utterly mistaken. I have never corresponded with any Banker Wigan!"

"Then I am, of course, compelled to arrest you!" said the Commissary, drawing a step nearer.

John Grover did not seem to comprehend the meaning of these words. With glassy eyes he stared at the official. At last he seemed to understand, and with ill-concealed rage his eyes flashed fire.

"Arrest me! Arrest me!" he stammered. "Sir, such an insult!"

"Enough now!" broke in Molitor. "Once more, Mr. Grover, I arrest you in the name of the law, because there is strong suspicion that you have,

directly or indirectly caused the death of Banker Wigan!"

At the same time he clapped his hands and the two constables in the ante-room entered.

John Grover was trembling in all his limbs; but when he saw the pointed helmets of the constables enter his room, loud sobs rose from his bosom. He turned round and rushed into the adjoining room.

But Molitor was on his heels; at a glance he had taken in the situation. He just caught a glimpse of the American, as he seized a revolver that was lying on a little stand near the bed, and before Grover could raise the terrible weapon to his temple, he had seized his wrist with an iron grasp.

The two men struggled for a moment, each bent upon the possession of the weapon, but in an instant the constables flew to the assistance of their superior. The American could not overcome the combined efforts of four men, and soon the revolver was in the hands of the policemen. Pale and trembling John Grover stood there, his arms held by the latter.

"Oh! This disgrace! this disgrace!" he sighed and groaned. "Why did you not let me die, sir?"

His words spoke of such deep, heartfelt sorrow, that Molitor, almost against his will, felt deep sympathy for the foreigner.

"I have to do my duty," he said, "and I wish you would not make it harder than it is already. Arrest does not mean condemnation. If you feel insulted by being arrested, and if you are innocent of the act that is imputed to you, you may rely upon it that

you will find in Germany judges who will do you justice. I have to do my duty, however, and I beg you will let us take you quietly and silently out of this hotel, so as to avoid the necessity of fettering you."

At the same time he drew two black handcuffs from his pocket.

"Not that! oh, God! Not that! Such disgrace I could not survive!" begged the American.

"I should be as sorry as you, if I were compelled to resort to such measures," said the Commissary. "Now listen to me! You will leave the hotel very quietly, accompanied by myself and this official in citizen's dress, and get into a carriage. No notice will be taken of us. Then you will have to do with the Judge before whom you will be brought. You two men will remain here and see to it—" he added, turning to the two constables—"that nothing is moved here, but remains just as it now lies and stands. The rest the Judge will decide."

As Grover and his escort were slowly descending the thickly-carpeted staircase, the rattling of glasses and plates and the clank of knives and forks reached them from the festively lighted dining-room, while an incessant hum gave evidence that dining and conversing were not incompatible. Now and then glasses were touched, and hearty laughter arose from scattered groups.

Biting his lips, the American walked on between his two companions, attempting no resistance. Only when he passed the *portier's* den and saw the man,

with open mouth and staring eyes, gaze at the strange procession, he turned deep red in the face, and his chin sank still lower upon his breast. The constable who had been waiting for the Commissary with the *portier*, now at a sign from his master, hurried to the nearest cab-stand, and soon returned with a carriage, which promptly took the officers with their prisoner to the building in which the Criminal Court held its sessions.

CHAPTER VII

The Commissary of Police went, as in duty bound, first to deliver his prisoner into the hands of the jailer, and then to make his report to Judge Feilen, in whose court criminals were tried. The tall, old gentleman, slightly stooping, bent his still bright eyes with intense attention upon the statement which the Commissary of Police rendered. Then he nodded assent and said, while looking at the young official with more than ordinary interest:

"My dear Molitor, I cannot but tell you how much I appreciate your action in this case. Under the circumstances you could not do otherwise. Nor can I doubt that the prisoner is to some extent responsible for the crime that has evidently been committed. To what degree he may be guilty—that remains to be ascertained." Then he reflected

again a few minutes. "You have left watchmen both in the deceased banker's private office and in the apartments of the American?" and when the Commissary said "Yes," he looked at his watch and added: "I was going home to dinner, but duty comes first. I wish you would join me in examining the grounds once more."

The Commissary was, of course, ready, and they went first to the banker's house in Empire Street.

Here they found the clerks and the numerous customers all in a state of unabated excitement; no one thought of business, but all discussed the mysterious events of the past night. Voices were heard speaking very loud in the private office, where it was known one of the constables was still on duty. The curious stood before the thickly padded door, as if it had led to the Most Holy of the Tabernacle.

The judge made an end to the animated scene

"When do you usually close?" he asked.

"At six in the afternoon," replied Slummer.

"It is four now," said the Judge, looking at his watch, "but we can close a little earlier to-day. Are you not the head clerk of the firm?"

The young man bowed courteously.

"Do you know what Mr. Wigan's wishes were, in case of sudden death?" continued the Judge.

"I think it would be greatly to the interest of the firm to continue every part of the business without break," replied the man. "I have already discussed the matter with Mrs. Wigan, and she was entirely of my opinion."

"Well, that matters little to us—we are simply interested in finding out what was the *status* of the bank when the calamity occurred, and for that purpose we must examine the books and accounts."

The Commissary, who was standing quite near the group, fancied he saw Slummer change color, and his instinctive suspicion of this cat-like man grew strongly. The Judge gave no sign of having noticed anything, but gave orders to close the bank for to-day, and proceeded to the banker's private office. The constable who had been left in charge, reported that all was as it had been handed over to him, and the Judge requested Molitor to show him the papers which he had confiscated in the morning. This was done, and a thorough search of the room and of every piece of furniture was made, but without result. Suddenly, however, the Commissary, who was on his knees almost under the table, uttered a cry of greatest surprise.

"Well, what is it, dear Molitor?" asked the Judge.

Instead of answering, the Commissary carefully smoothed a crumpled slip of paper which he had found there and read at a glance. He handed it at once to the Judge, who read these words:

"NOTICE.

"I herewith recall my consent to the betrothal of my daughter Erna to the manufacturer Richard Dunsing in Seaton.

"THEODORE WIG—.

"February 9, 1889."

"This looks as if it had been written in great haste," said the Judge, after he had read the few but portentous words a second time in a low voice. "The writer was evidently at a loss what to write and how to write it, and then when all depended on one word perhaps, he seems to have repented and left his signature unfinished. Then he crumpled up the paper and threw it under the table. It was there you found it, was it not?"

"Yes, I did!" was the answer.

"No doubt he meant to throw it into the waste-paper basket and missed it. Was it your Chef's usual way to leave papers of importance lying about thus openly for public inspection?"

"You forget, Judge," interposed the young man superciliously, "that even I did not enter this room unasked, and only when he himself was present. He was peculiar in this, that he saw the contents of his basket burned at regular intervals, and thus he felt no anxiety about the value of the loose papers, or about a misuse that could be made of them."

The Judge now turned to the Commissary, who had not allowed his great astonishment to interfere for a moment with his minute watch of the chief clerk's features.

"You seem to have guessed right, dear Mr. Molitor," he said, in so low a voice that Slummer could not hear a word. "There seem really to have arisen serious troubles between the banker and Dunsing. And now this man lives in Seaton! But all the

other evidence again contradicts such a suspicion."

"There is more than one great mystery involved in this affair," said Molitor, thoughtfully, "and especially the fact that the payment of the note and the breaking of the betrothal had taken place on the same day, is very remarkable and puzzling."

"Yes," said the Judge, "especially as the banker himself has accepted the notes—"

"That is to say, *if* he has really accepted them," cried Molitor, suddenly given expression to his rising suspicion. As he looked around, he caught once more a malicious smile on the chief clerk's face, who had evidently caught the meaning of his last words.

"I think we have done all we can do here," said the Judge. "I shall give further orders in a few days. You, Schmidt, take all we have found here and keep it carefully in your own hands. To-night you can bring it to my office, before I go home."

As the gentlemen on their way out once more passed through the different rooms of the bank, they found them all empty.

At the door Slummer also took leave of them; while the Commissary went upstairs, in order to subject the banker's living-rooms to a second search. If he had hoped to meet Miss Erna, and to be able to tell her a few consoling words, he was doomed to disappointment. Mrs. Wigan, who received him very formally in her sitting-room, told him when he inquired after her daughter, that she had suffered much from the excitement of the day, and had been

compelled to retire. The physician had been sent for and apprehended a violent fever. The young lover had left the house soon after the Commissary's first visit. The search proved fruitless, and the gentlemen, with the lady of the house, returned to the parlor.

Now only, the Judge thought proper to inform the unfortunate widow that the man who was most likely the cause of her husband's death had been secured and was now in prison.

"Then you really believe a crime has been committed?" asked the lady, shaking her head. "I cannot imagine who on earth could have had a reason for taking my husband's life."

"Nor are we quite certain yet," assented Judge Feilen, "whether an accident has occurred, or a murder has been committed. All we can do just now, is to inform ourselves of all the most minute details of your husband's life during these last days. Thus we have discovered that your husband was yesterday in an unusual state of mind. Could this anger have been in any way connected with the person of your intended son-in-law?"

"How do you come to think of him?" asked Mrs. Wigan, very reservedly.

"Did you not perhaps catch a word here or there that he let fall in speaking of Mr. Dunsing?"

"I would rather not answer that question," replied the lady. "In our excitement we are apt to say things which we afterwards bitterly regret having spoken. Besides, my husband was not speak-

ing to me, he spoke to himself, uttering threats and indistinct words."

"Ah! If we only knew them!" said the Judge. "Consider, my dear Madame, if we knew what had caused this unusual anger in your husband, who was so little given to excitement, as everybody assures us, how important every little, trifling word might become! Above all, bear in mind, I beseech you, that a man is now in jail, because he is suspected of having committed the terrible deed."

"To be sure, that is as you say!" said Mrs. Wigan, visibly moved; but at once, she added: "If it were not so very disagreeable to make family-affairs public when they concern nobody."

"Can there be any question of revoking the engagement of Miss Wigan and Mr. Dunsing?" asked the Judge.

Mrs. Wigan could not conceal her surprise. "How do you know that?" she asked, in an irritated voice.

"'I am not omniscient, yet I know much,'" quoted the Judge from a well-known author, politely bowing and at once adding: "But I presume my guess for once proved correct?"

"Well, yes. I must confess my husband was terribly excited. I must premise that Erna's engagement did not have my cordial consent. I thought it was not real affection on Erna's part, but the gratification of seeing at her feet a pleasing young man, at the head of a large manufactory and popular in the ball-room. I was utterly amazed when,

last night, my husband came into my room, feverishly excited and talking wildly: 'I'll stop that false, thievish way of theirs—how lucky it was the bandage fell from my eyes in time!—to expose my one dear child to such a fate upon earth!—but this very evening I shall tell the blackguard to his face! I'll make him aware that the engagement is at an end!'"

"What! Did your husband say that?" asked the Judge, after exchanging looks, full of meaning, with the younger man. "If I understand you aright, your husband intended to go out to Seaton, to hold the manufacturer to account for something he had done amiss, and to tell him that the engagement was broken off?"

"That was so," answered the lady reservedly.

"Now, I also must beg to be allowed a question," said Molitor, who had till now kept modestly in the background. "Do you happen to know if your husband handed Mr. Dunsing a couple of notes?"

"I knew very little of my husband's business transactions, but I think it highly improbable that he should have held any notes made by Mr. Dunsing, since he often told me that his excellent financial condition had had much weight with him in giving him Erna's hand."

"To make notes—and notes for a large amount—seems indeed incompatible with such a position," said the Judge thoughtfully.

The Commissary promised the lady of the house to let her know the result of the autopsy, and then

the two gentlemen took their leave. When they reached the street they hailed a cab and drove together to the Hotel Metropole.

"The case is becoming more and more complicated," said the Judge, beginning the conversation. "I have my notions about this man Dunsing, and yet this also is mere suspicion. Did you not tell me that this morning his manner rather prejudiced you against him?"

"Yes, I said so," was the reply, "and after what Mrs. Wigan tells us, I feel more inclined than ever to look upon the notes as false. If they are a forgery, then Dunsing also has had good reasons to wish for the banker's disappearance from the stage of this life, before dangerous revelations should be made."

"But the man denies having met the banker last night! And do not all the reasons for the arrest of the American speak against the possibility of such a suspicion; and so far I have seen not a trace of a common culpability of the two men?"

"Not the slightest," assented Molitor.

"Nevertheless we must both of us keep a strict watch over this pretended American."

Here the carriage stopped before the hotel. The news of the arrest had in the meantime spread through the whole palatial building, and the proprietor himself appeared at once, anxiously trying to ascertain the reasons for such a painful measure. The Judge and his companion were shown to Mr. Grover's apartments, where they said they wished to renew the search for certain papers. They found

but little. The principal trunk of the traveler contained four open compartments; the upper two held papers, letters and writing material. They ascertained thus the identity of the letter found in Mr. Wigan's writing-table with the paper used by the American, and this was, of course, of the greatest importance. Besides these papers the trunk contained only a very abundant supply of expensive clothing—the boots showed without exception the peculiar horse-shoe forming a heart-shape. In the parlor nothing was found, except that in a drawer of a small *escritoire* one of Banker Wigan's cards was lying. It was the card which he had sent, a few hours before his misfortune, to the American, and on the back a few words were written in pencil. They ran thus:

"I did not find you at home, but as it is imperatively necessary that we should meet, I will expect you this evening, at 9 o'clock, in my villa at Seaton, Neander Street No. 96. You had better take the tramway from Empire Town to Seaton. Every child will show you to my house in Seaton.

"THEODORE."

This card, the possessions of the American, and the fifty thousand marks deposited in the hotel safe, all was legally attached by the Court.

After his return to the Court House, the Judge immediately sent for the prisoner. The scene was excessively stormy. Mr. Grover once more protested most earnestly against his arrest, and appealed

to the American Legation. But the Judge had nothing for him except a cool shrugging of his shoulders.

"We are investigating what will appear in all probability a crime punishable with death, and you are strongly suspected of being the criminal. Unless you recall the untruths of which you made yourself guilty this morning before our Commissary of Police, and resolve to answer all my questions truthfully, and to the best of your knowledge, there is no likelihood of your being restored to freedom."

"Then you will throw me into jail like a common malefactor?" Grover cried, in a perfect rage, jumping up from his chair and looking furiously at the Judge.

"You had better answer my questions," continued the latter, paying no attention to his remark. "Will you admit having met Banker Wigan last night in his villa in Seaton?"

"No!" was the prisoner's sharp answer.

"Where were you at that time?"

"I told your Commissary that I had a violent headache and took a walk in the open air."

"From which you did not return till two o'clock at night?" asked Judge Feilen incredulously.

"Just so!" was the answer.

"That is very incredible, Mr. Grover."

"Great Heaven! If I had known that such a fatal accident would happen to me, I would have provided myself with two witnesses!" the American cried bitterly.

"And in what direction did you take your walk?" the Judge asked, very quietly.

"I hardly know; it is an old habit of mine to wander at haphazard through the streets of a town. I left the city proper and went into the suburbs."

"That was certainly a very peculiar amusement in this weather," the Judge said, sneeringly; "and you walked really for hours in this soaked state of the ground?"

"I had my head full of thoughts," replied John Grover. "Then it was I saw a tram-car coming up; I jumped on and found upon inquiry that it was on its way to town, but when I told the conductor that I wanted to go to Empire Square, he replied that that was exactly the opposite direction. Without reflecting, I immediately jumped off again, and in so doing hurt my hand as you see very badly."

"Very badly indeed," added the Judge; "for the jail-surgeon reports that the wound is not only very painful, but may possibly have very serious consequences. You must admit that this is quite suspicious. A man in your position, with an abundance of means at your disposal, is not likely to be satisfied with a handkerchief twisted around a wounded hand—but I will tell you why you refused to send for a doctor and actually gave the hotel servant ten marks to keep silent. You were afraid that this injury would naturally cause you to be suspected as soon as the news of the crime committed last night should have become public."

"I protest against any such unfounded conclusion.

I protest most solemnly against being treated like a convicted malefactor!" cried John Grover, fearfully excited.

So far, the calmness of the Judge had remained unshaken; now, however, the constant opposition of the American produced some irritation.

"You have always lived in America, you say—were you born there?"

"Yes!" was the answer.

"And you deny altogether having been in Germany in your earlier life, or having been born here? What did you mean, then, by the words in your letter, which you sent from Hamburg to Banker Wigan, that you wished to stand by the grave which contained all that was dearest to you on earth?"

"That is very simple," replied Grover, quickly recovering himself after a momentary hesitation. "I had somebody who was very near and dear to my heart, who went from me, and with her went the happiness of my life. That happened ten years ago; she fled across the Atlantic to Germany, and here she died!"

"That certainly sounds very touching," replied the Judge, scornfully. "Probably this lady—for I presume it was a lady—fled to Banker Wigan, and it was by her means that you and he became such intimate friends as to call each other, German fashion, *thou*, in your correspondence?"

"That was exactly the case!" answered the American, and his eyes shone brightly.

"And what is the name of her who has so prematurely sunk into the grave?" asked the Judge, full of expectation.

"I decline giving any information on that object," replied Grover, quietly meeting the searching look of the other. "As far as I can see, the question concerns not my private affairs, but simply whether I was or was not in the banker's company last night. I deny this and await the evidence to the contrary."

"You do not seem to stand before a judge the first time in your life, as you proceed so calmly," he said, with bitter irony in his voice. "How then is that past which you say you fear? In what court have you appeared before? You do not imagine that we cannot find that out easily? Do you not see that your utterly useless, continued denial only makes your position worse?"

The American make no reply, but observed an absolute silence. In vain did the Judge appeal to him, first kindly and then with sternness and threatening. Obstinately Grover insisted upon it, that his intercourse with the banker had been purely official, and that he had not been in his company at the villa.

"But your denial is absolute nonsense and contrary to all reason," said the Judge, trying hard to read the prisoner's eyes. "The track left by your boots proves beyond all doubt that you were last night at the banker's country-house."

"Pshaw! There are many feet like mine, and many boots!" Grover replied coldly. "Nowadays

all boots are made on the same last and fashion is international."

"But you forget that the imprint of your boots is unique, and that the heels of your boots have the same remarkable horse-shoe in the shape of a heart."

"I had really paid no attention to that, but if it is as you say, why! then that is probably the fashion all over the United States."

"Well, that is all I wanted to ascertain," exclaimed the Judge triumphantly. "We only maintain that a man wearing boots that were made in America has made those tracks, and you are the man!"

"You would find it difficult to prove that," replied Grover, defiantly meeting the searching look of the Judge. "I presume there are many Americans in this city, and any one of them can have left those foot marks. Once more, I was not in Seaton last night and, as far as I know, I have never in all my life been there!"

"And will you also continue to deny having written that letter from Hamburg, in cipher and headed 'I. W. A.?'"

When no answer came, he continued:

"This system of denying everything will avail you rather little. A man of your culture ought to know that to deny your own handwriting is fighting against windmills."

"Well, I will admit having written the letters!"

The judge's eyes blazed up with triumph.

"Well, then you have also written the promise to meet the banker last night."

"I regret I cannot agree to that. Have you never made engagements which you afterwards were prevented from keeping? But I will admit this also. I had promised to meet Banker Wigan in Seaton, but I did not appear. If you doubt that, prove the contrary. I defy you!"

"And yet your Hamburg letter has enough in it to strengthen our suspicions. You admit directly that you are not sailing under your own flag. Now no man in his proper position does so unless he has reason to fear something in the past; as is the case with you, I presume."

John Grover haughtily defied the Judge's penetrating eyes and then said almost contemptuously:

"Let me tell you one thing, Mr. Judge, you will save yourself much time and much trouble if you spare me henceforth such questions. *Who* I really am, that does not concern you in the least; besides, my own authorities at home will speak favorably enough of me, I am sure. The one question is—I repeat it once more, but for the very last time—whether I called upon Banker Wigan at his villa in Seaton last night or not. If you can prove that, you may condemn me! If not, you will please hold yourself in readiness to give me satisfaction for this fearful disgrace you are now heaping upon me. The United States of America are not accustomed to allow their citizens to be treated thus abroad with impunity. And now ask what you choose—I refuse to answer!"

The interview had to be ended here; Grover was

taken back to his cell. When the door closed behind him, the Judge jumped up from his chair, and with arms crossed over his breast, he walked up and down in the room, evidently greatly agitated. Then he paused before the Commissary of Police, who had been present during the whole scene, and said thoughtfully:

"An abominable, eel-like fellow! But we'll catch him! I pray you will at once use every means to find out the previous life of our prisoner. The most important, however, is to ascertain the intimate relations which bound him and Banker Wigan to each other, and which undoubtedly will furnish the key to the crime."

"I do not know, Judge, but the man does not by any means make this evening the same unfavorable impression upon me, that he made this morning," said Molitor, very seriously. "Especially, the matches found in the cellar near the body, speak against his guilt. He may have tried merely to ascertain the position of the murdered man, or to find out if he was already dead; but some of the matches were found so far from the window that he could hardly have thrown them so far."

"My dear Molitor, I know your well-known ingenuity; but bear in mind, that there is no criminal case in which you do not meet with contradictions. The matches may have been left there as well by some tramp or vagabond, who perhaps spent the night before in that sheltered position."

"There I fully agree with you, Judge," Molitor

answered, slowly but sincerely. "But still I cannot yet see clearly. There is no doubt that Grover and the banker left the villa together, and then parted close by the garden gate; then they met once more and fell out with each other. But what is the meaning of that third track, evidently belonging to a common working man? I feel more and more as if Grover and the banker might have quarreled; but what happened next—that I dare not guess. I am sure it was not Grover who threw the body into that cellar. I rather think he may have been the gentleman who spoke to the watchman, and warned him that an accident had happened in Neander Street."

"At all events, we shall have to confront the American and the watchman, and at the same time inquiries must be made at all the tram-car lines to ascertain where the American got his wound."

"Another mystery to me," said the Commissary, in a low voice, "is what the relations between Wigan and the manufacturer may have been of late. I cannot help suspecting that all was not as it ought to have been, and that the banker's sad fate is connected with this recent change in his estimate of the future son-in-law."

The Judge stopped his walk, and leaning against the big table, he looked at the younger man, deep in thought, and said:

"I also do not like these relations, to tell the truth. It would appear from what the widow gave us to understand, that her husband all of a sudden

considered the betrothed of his daughter a blackguard and a criminal."

"Still, if you remember, Judge, the widow said she was greatly startled by this sudden change in her husband's estimate of the young man; it must have been of very recent date, and I should not wonder if it had been caused by the presentation of the two notes that fell due on that day."

"But why should the manufacturer have attempted to forge these notes? He could not but see what terrible danger he ran by committing such a crime, and how very easily it might be discovered. He must have also known that the discovery would instantly end the engagement."

"You forget a trifling remark, which Mrs. Wigan made."

"What was that?"

"She said that on account of family mourning the wedding, originally fixed for the twenty-eighth of January, had suddenly been postponed till four weeks later. The notes ran two months; consequently they fell due after the wedding—if it had taken place at the original date—and were forged—if forged—by the actual son-in-law. Of course the banker would have had to pay them, to conceal the disgrace and to save the family honor."

"That would be acting like a thoroughbred blackguard," said the Judge. The Commissary merely shrugged his shoulders.

"By the way," began the Judge, glad to speak of something else, "I do not quite like this Mrs. Wig-

an; she is so fearfully chilly and reserved; so unapproachable, and so perfectly composed. I never saw a woman so calm and cool whose husband had been, after a long married life, taken so suddenly from among the living and the happy. It shocked me. And why would she tell us nothing of her husband's state of mind on that fatal day?"

"I noticed the same unnatural reserve," replied Molitor, "but I thought it was painful to her to deliver family troubles and purely private matters to publicity."

"And I, I cannot suppress all suspicion—I think it more and more likely that there is something between the manufacturer and this good lady."

This turn of the conversation was so very sudden and so utterly unexpected, that the Commissary looked at the Judge in amazement.

"What!" he cried, greatly excited, "you would charge the lady with being more or less directly an accomplice in her husband's fatal end? Do you really think a lady, such as Mrs. Wigan, can possibly be capable of such an act?"

"Oh! do not get excited," said the Judge with a faint smile. "Nevertheless, my dear Molitor," he added, familiarly seizing the young man by one shoulder, "do me the favor and keep an eye on this woman. I am, for instance, deeply interested to know what kind of life this husband and wife can have lived. The whole case is full of mystery, and I should not wonder if it does not keep in store for us a number of surprises."

"I am, of course, at your service, Judge; but I confess," he added, helping himself to one of the cigars which the Judge offered him, "I cannot share your view. I am rather inclined to believe in a conspiracy. The banker may have become a rock of offense to some people, who may have wished to get rid of him. Consider, I pray! Here were all of a sudden four persons, big, stout men probably, who turn up at a late hour of the night, when even the most crowded streets of our city are apt to be deserted, in Neander Street, which is generally very lonely even in the daytime."

"Then you think that the murder was committed for the sake of robbing the banker?"

"That I am not prepared to say yet," replied the Commissary, shrugging his shoulders. "Watch and chain are gone, it is true; so are the porte-monnaie and the purse; but, on the other hand, real robbers would have not overlooked their victim's valuable diamond-ring, although his gloves concealed it. Such rascals generally proceed very systematically; and here, in Neander Street, they were pretty sure of not being interrupted."

"Well, that may be; but we, at all events, have done our duty and must prepare to do it still further. Perhaps to-morrow will bring us light."

He left his young colleague, urging him once more to be very careful in carrying on his investigations.

CHAPTER VIII.

The sudden and violent death of Banker Wigan filled the city with horror and dismay ; a number of sympathizing friends and acquaintances called at the house and left their cards. All who were admitted were full of sympathy for the affectionate daughter, who could not control her heart-rending grief, while they admired the reserved composure of the widow. That a variety of rumors sprang up in consequence was to be expected ; the views of the majority, however, were as yet favorable to Mrs. Wigan.

She certainly did her duty now, as she had always done, fully, conscientiously ; although accustomed to great simplicity in her own habits, even in her dress, she ordered the funeral as she knew her husband would have wished it to be. One feature alone created some comment : the funeral procession did not start from the house, as was customary, but from the chapel attached to the Morgue ! The unusual abundance of wreaths and garlands, however, and the costly pomp of the whole affair, that

seemed to represent a small fortune in itself, made the people forget all such smaller considerations.

The physicians who had participated in the autopsy had not come to a unanimous verdict on the manner of the banker's death. The destruction of the skull was so complete, that no certain opinion could be formed as to the final cause of death. It was evident that the great injury done to the brain had been fatal; but no one dare say that this was the result of a murderous blow or of an accident, such as a great fall. The reports were transmitted in due course to Criminal Judge Feilen, who, in common with his associate, Commissary of Police Molitor, developed a feverish activity in endeavoring to explain and to terminate as promptly as possible this unusually complicated case, which was sure to become a *cause célèbre.*

In the counting rooms of the bank, in the meantime, most exciting scenes were taking place. Theodore Wigan had been one of the most highly esteemed bankers of the city, and had especially enjoyed the confidence of the so-called middle classes of society, who had intrusted their savings to him in the shape of interest-bearing deposits. The honesty of the deceased was proverbial. Now, however, when earth had returned to earth, ashes to ashes, most of the depositors came to withdraw their money in order to invest it elsewhere. The bank drifted about, for some days, like a vessel that has lost its pilot; the chief clerk seemed to have lost his head. He who had but rarely been

seen in the banker's private part of the building, was now twenty times a day calling for Mrs. Wigan, asking her a thousand questions, and making it very evident to her keen perception, that he wished as far as he could to shift the responsibility from his own shoulders on those of the widow.

This continued perhaps a week, until one morning the oldest book-keeper asked to see her and inquired if she knew what had become of the head clerk. "He did not come all day yesterday," he reported, "and yet he is the soul of the whole business, and without him we cannot carry it on any longer."

The poor lady knew nothing; Slummer had never told her a word of his plans, nor had he sent her an excuse for his absence. A messenger was thereupon sent to his lodgings, who returned with the surprising news that the young man had disappeared since the day before.

"That is strange, very strange," said Mrs. Wigan, turning deathly pale, but preserving her composure. "I have never been able to understand how my husband could put such great confidence in this Mr. Slummer. I trust this is not to be an additional trial sent by Providence!"

She was not left long in the dark. Only an hour later the same old book-keeper, to whom the widow had provisionally intrusted the general direction of the bank, came once more to her, but accompanied by the assistant cashier.

"Great God! What is it now?" asked the poor lady.

"We have sad news, Madame!" stammered the cashier, and Mrs. Wigan now perceived that both the men were very pale. "We have discovered a deficit in the bank. There are several people below who demand their deposits, and we find that in our books they are marked as having already been paid. This has led us to inquire more generally into that branch of the business, and we find that the most astounding disorder, in fact, perfect confusion, reigns in that department."

"The police must be informed instantly. All the books must be investigated," added the old book-keeper.

"Will you be so kind as to take the necessary steps?" asked the lady; "my head is so full of care and anxiety. You know my daughter is sick in bed, and although there may be no immediate danger, she is utterly exhausted, and needs my constant presence and most careful nursing."

The two men left her. But it was barely noon when she was requested to come down stairs. She found the outer doors closed to the public, but within she saw all most anxiously engaged in some new and startling activity. Great and unexpected events had evidently created universal excitement. A small man with a bald head, but a huge, gray beard and a red nose, played the commander in the place of Mr. Slummer; he did not even stoop to receive Mrs. Wigan. He was an officer of the Commercial Court, who acted as expert in the examina-

tion of books and accounts—the widow learned this from Mr. Molitor, who had also been sent for.

Until late in the night the whole force of clerks was kept busy in the bank, but the result of this feverish, unheard of activity was sad enough. It appeared now, most unexpectedly to all, even the most intimate friends of the deceased banker, that in the branch of deposits alone the greatest dishonesty had prevailed; enormous sums were stolen in a most inexplicable manner, and the forged papers which had rendered this possible, were such marvels of skill, that no human ingenuity could have been led to harbor suspicion.

"Did your husband speculate on 'Change?" asked the Comptroller, with the bold candor justified by his responsible office.

"I do not know; all this is so new, so strange to me!" replied the latter, shaking her head. "I only knew that all the dangerous ventures in which my husband engaged, seemed to be favored by Fate; they were invariably successful. We rarely mentioned business; but all that my husband ever said of his bank, and quite recent utterances especially made me think that everything was in a most flourishing condition here."

"Well, we must not fear the worst at once," said the book-keeper, anxiously, to his late employer's widow. "If we only had Mr. Slummer here,—he was the only one in whom Mr. Wigan confided,—he could be of the greatest use to us now."

A scornful smile played on Molitor's lips.

"That gentleman had probably his reasons for disappearing so suddenly. But we shall give him an opportunity yet, I hope, to explain matters."

"Yes, I should beg that that be done—most earnestly—" said the old man angrily. "He must have known about these stealings. He alone had these deposits in charge. So far, the deficit amounts to a million marks; what the assets may be is as yet uncertain; but I doubt that they will be half as much."

Mrs. Wigan looked petrified. At this unexpected statement she turned deathly pale.

"My God! My God!" she exclaimed. "What new visitation is this? The assets amount only to half of the debts—are we beggars then?"

A frosty shrugging of the shoulders was all the gray-haired book-keeper, who had himself lost all his savings, could say in reply.

"Of course the bank will have to go into liquidation," interposed the Comptroller. "It will be my duty to demand it. In the meantime, I presume, the bank had better be closed till a receiver can be appointed."

This was done. Mr. Molitor accompanied the poor lady to her rooms. She walked by his side like one in a dream, having no will of her own. She evidently did not hear the consoling words of the young officer, but looked around with aimlessly wandering eyes. Then, as she entered through the heavy, gold-embroidered velvet *portierès*, and her eye instinctively fell upon the costly paintings in richly

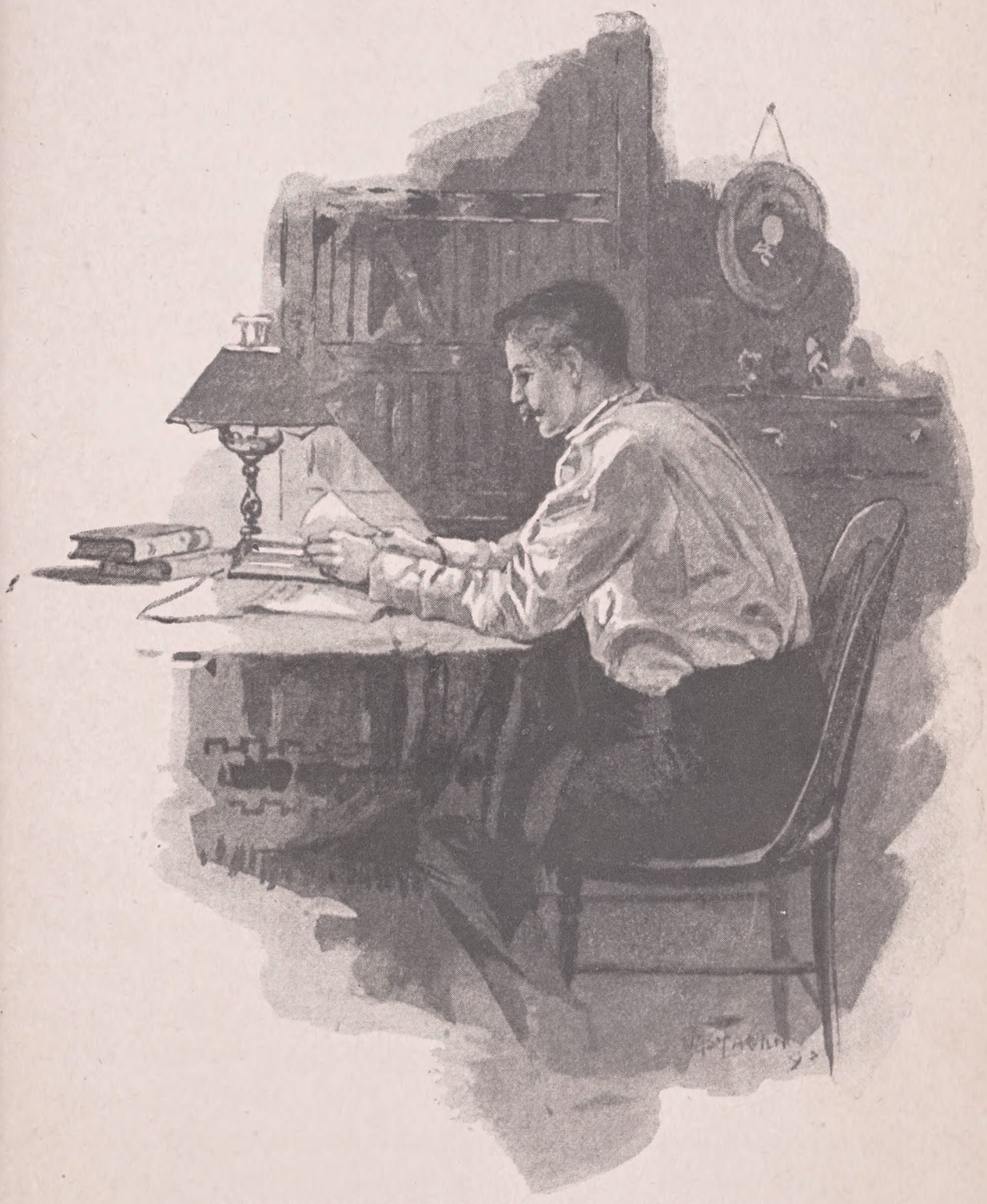
gilt frames, and the gorgeous furniture, a shudder passed through her frame.

"All a lie! All a lie!" she murmured, and a fixed, hateful look came into her eyes. "Can it be? Has he not only cheated me out of my happiness in life? Has he not even secured the future of his only child?"

She had uttered these words in evident self-forgetfulness, yielding to the overwhelming grief in her heart. Now she became conscious of the sympathizing eyes of the Commissary, and she made a supreme effort.

"I am obliged to you for your kindness; but you cannot help me," she said, with a faint smile on her lips. "So much that was utterly unexpected has come upon me since I saw you the first time here, in this room, and I know not what the future may bring us. As yet all is too new, too unexpected, and I cannot decipher what is true and what is not true."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Wigan!" said the young man, in a tone of deep and heartfelt sympathy, seizing her hand and raising it to his lips, "believe me, I am sincere. I fear a severe trial awaits you and your young daughter, and I beseech you, allow me to share your sorrow. You hardly know me it is true, but I am sure you cannot doubt the sincerity of my offer; I am honestly anxious to assist you as a friend, by my advise and my services, and if I am well informed, such a true and loyal friend will, ere long, be very necessary for you."



MOLITOR STUDYING THE CIPHERS.—*See Chapter XII.*

"I thank you, Mr. Molitor, and I will cheerfully accept your kind offer to look a little after us; but I hope all is not lost—we have at least one friend yet who is near to us—Dunsing."

She paused as she noticed a bitter, dubious smile on Molitor's face, which her mention of that name had evidently provoked. Why did she herself smile as incredulously, as she continued:

"I shall write to him at once. He must help us; it is his duty. Perhaps all is not lost yet; whatever people may think of my husband, no one will dare doubt his honesty. He never touched a penny of those unlucky deposits, I could swear!"

The Commissary left her with a heavy heart; he knew better what was before her than she did, poor woman! That day the telegraph sent its messages to the four corners of the earth after the dishonest cashier, Slummer, who had evidently sought safety in flight. In the bank, in the meantime, the prophecies of the Comptroller proved true, one by one. The assets of the bank were, on the whole, in excellent order and would have twice over sufficed to cover all liabilities; but there was this enormous deficit in the deposits! This was all the worse for the widow, as she had brought her husband no dower and, according to the local law, had no right now to ask for anything.

Unfortunately, at this time there sprang up a report,—no one could tell how or whence,—that the banker had speculated at 'Change, together with his cashier. Gradually it leaked out now, that Slummer

had ventured upon the most dangerous enterprises, in which enormous amounts were at stake, and that—alas! he had used his Chef's name instead of his own in these wild-cat enterprises, which were almost invariably unsuccessful. The very first of the month he had had to pay a sum of two hundred thousand marks! The bankrupcy was unavoidable, especially as the survivors had neither kinsmen nor friends who would have undertaken to come to their assistance.

Under these circumstances the widow was unspeakably grateful when the physicians could at last encourage her again by the assurance that Erna's fine constitution and perfect health had won the battle and the dreaded danger of a nervous fever was averted. She recovered but slowly, to be sure, and the former cheerfulness, which had lent her face such special charms, had left her features, while sad melancholy seemed daily more and more to invade her face and her manner. Her grief for her father, whom she had most devotedly loved, was so great, so overwhelming, that she scarcely noticed the absence of her betrothed.

It is true that in the first days after the terrible calamity Richard Dunsing had repeatedly called at the house and inquired after the family; at the same time, however, he had appeared excessively anxious to ascertain what steps the authorities had taken to direct the management of the bank. The more alarming the reports about the financial condition became, the more rarely he appeared, and the

last time when the young manufacturer showed himself there, had been the day on which Erna for the first time left her sick-bed. He had found the poor girl sitting in an arm-chair, and the touching sight of this lovely, suffering being, seemed to have won his heart and induced him to show himself more affectionate and tender than usual. But this had been his last visit, and the next day appeared in the newspapers the official notice of the liquidation of the bank.

Now a mournful period began for the two lonely ladies—a time full of sore trials and bitter experiences. The whole household was catalogued, and the usual painful preparations were made for an auction. The ladies retired to two rooms, which they were allowed to retain for the present. As rats are said to leave a sinking ship, the servants had gone, one after the other, most of them with tears in their eyes and genuine sorrow in their hearts, but not one of the maid-servants offered to stay.

The clerks and servants of the bank also had all been dismissed; only the old book-keeper, who had known the banker from boyhood up, was not to be induced to leave the familiar precincts, and offered his services to the widow, as Molitor had already done.

Mrs. Wigan had, until now, shown a really wonderful courage; in dignified silence she had even borne the disgraceful scenes enacted by some of the more impudent creditors. Only one difficulty she found very much in her way: this was her daugh-

ter. Full of tenderness and sympathy, she had done all that could be done to keep Erna ignorant of the calamity which had overtaken them like a thief in the night. She had kept her away from the painful scenes that now almost daily filled the majestic rooms, in which formerly all had been happiness and enjoyment. But she could after all not keep her entirely free from all contact with the world, especially since she was once more allowed to be up and about. Even the silvery threads which appeared in the dark hair of her dignified, pale mother, made her aware that she suffered, and she offered to share her sufferings.

But when the poor widow was alone, the fixed rigidity of her features disappeared and the fine, spiritual lines in her face spoke of utter despair. Then she sank into an easy-chair, breaking down under the unbearable burden, and folding her hands on her bosom, sigh after sigh would arise and betray the hopeless despair that had invaded her heart. The change in her circumstances was too great and too sudden; she could not conceive it yet, that the pleasant, comfortable life, to which she had ever been accustomed, should be gone forever, while on the stony and thorny path on which she was to walk hereafter, nothing awaited her but anxiety and care and the struggle for daily bread.

The old book-keeper had done all that could be done to prevent the ruin of the great banking-house; even when it had to go into liquidation, he had not lost all hope.

"It is true the misfortune is great," he said to Mrs. Wigan, "but every sensible man must see that it was not the fault of our esteemed Chef; it was that hyprocrite, that rascal Slummer,—may God judge him! Perhaps, Mrs. Wigan, if you were to call on some of the most important creditors, they might give you a better answer. They are mostly wealthy men, who will not mind their losses much. Who knows but when the creditors hold their meeting, they might go so far as to put aside a small capital, the interest of which would enable you to lead a retired life. Oh, I should be so happy, so well contented, if that could be done! As to Miss Erna—no fear for her! We all know whose happy wife she will be!"

The good old man did not see the bitterness that appeared in the lady's features. Undismayed by her silence, he drew forth a small list of the principal creditors, and explained to her what he thought she ought to say in each case, as he knew them all intimately.

After he had left her, the poor widow sank back in her chair, a picture of unutterable grief. For hours she remained thus, motionless; only a violent, spasmodic tremor betrayed the storm that was raging within. At last, however, she triumphed; her pride, till now the motive of all her actions, was overcome. She determined to humble herself.

"For your sake I will do it," she murmured to herself; "for your sake, my child! God is my witness; I would rather die than to utter a word of

supplication. But I fear for you, my sweet Erna! I fear much that the future will not bring you all that in the days of your childhood we and you have hoped for—and on that account I am ready to take this heavy burden upon myself."

She kept her word. Her first visit was paid to another great banker in the city, called Blackwater, a dear old friend of her husband's. He received her very affably, perhaps even cordially; but when she made known the real reason of her coming, he cooled off perceptibly.

"This is a bad business, my dear Mrs. Wigan, and I hardly know what to say. As far as I know how things stand, I must lose nearly a hundred thousand marks, and you must admit it is a pretty hard thing you ask of me—to return to you a part of the little fraction of my claim that I may be allotted. If I had ever anticipated that your esteemed husband's position was such a very bad one—" here he broke off, and added, after a short pause—"it was not right in him to profit in this way, by the confidence we all put in him."

Here he stopped, seeing the almost despairing look of the poor sufferer.

"My husband never meant to deceive you, God knows! Not he, but his cashier, Slummer, who is now sought for everywhere by the police, a reward being offered for his capture; he is the author of our ruin," Mrs. Wigan replied to him. "My husband may be blamable in some respects—which of us is not?—but in business he was a man of honor!"

The banker significantly shrugged his shoulders. "I will not say you are mistaken, Madame, but there are ugly reports current. I will, however, see, when the creditors hold their final meeting, what can be done for you and your daughter. You may rely upon me. But, to tell the truth, I would advise you rather to remain independent; it is always a bad thing to depend on the good will of others."

Deeply wounded, the poor widow took leave. The banker perhaps felt that he had gone too far, and tried to make amends by increased amiability. But his efforts were in vain; the iron had sunk too deep into the heart of the unfortunate lady; she bit her lips and went away silent.

And yet this was not the greatest humiliation which she had to encounter on her sorrowful errand. The more of the former friends of her husband, who were now his creditors, she saw, the more her confidence sank and hope after hope died out in her breaking heart. She had never thought too well of men. She was too keen and too proud at the same time, not to see in society how much that is superficial or mere form is concealed under all the fine phrases that are offered to the rich and the great. It was a terrible humiliation, therefore, to this haughty woman to go a suppliant from house to house—but her mother love overcame all, and for Erna's sake she drained the cup to the dregs. And bitter were they indeed—the same men who a short time ago paid most assiduous court to her, who had flattered and complimented her in order to receive

one of those much-coveted invitations to the famous "soirées" at her house, now treated her with studied coldness and with a painful absence of even the outer forms of respect, to which she had ever been accustomed.

Embittered and cast down she returned home. She shuddered at the idea of repeating the effort; and the old book-keeper, to whom she reported her ill-success, suppressing only the worst humiliation, was forced to confess that here nothing more was to be hoped for now. And yet the widow and the orphan had not experienced the worst blow that awaited them, and was to extinguish in Mrs. Wigan's heart the last spark of faith in human loyalty. This happened on the same day on which, in execution of the judicial decree, the last articles of furniture were removed from the house. Mrs. Wigan followed with fixed eyes and unconscious ears the words of the official who announced to her that she would be allowed to stay but a few days longer in the house, as it was to be publicly sold very soon.

"We shall not claim your indulgence that long," she stammered, and the tremor that passed through her whole body gave evidence of her great excitement. The man hardly left her with the last of the heavily, laden furniture vans when the bell rang, and the letter carrier brought a letter for the widow. She recognized at once Dunsing's handwriting and hesitated to open it; an ineffably bitter smile played about her lips. She knew the contentsof the letter beforehand, for she had read in the whole manner of the

young man that there was no trust to be put in him.

"Poor, dear Erna!" she murmured to herself. "It is a hard schooling which Fate sends you in your early youth. But it may be that our Heavenly Father, who knows better than we do, thus protects you from a greater misfortune."

With trembling hand she then opened the cover and unfolded the sheet within. An expression of supreme contempt appeared on her face as she glanced over the letter—it was only what she had all the time expected.

"This letter will be the best medicine for the poor child; she will yet thank Heaven not to have become the wife of that wretch who only coveted her wealth and knew not how to appreciate her pure, lovely heart!"

Once more the bell rang. This time it was the Commissary of Police, Mr. Molitor. The few weeks that had passed since his first visit at the house had brought about a certain intimacy between the banker's widow and the modest, but manly young official. Erna did not often appear when he called; she was still too deep in her grief.

"Read that, my young friend!" Mrs. Wigan said, offering him the letter. He only glanced at the first lines, knowing full well what to expect from such a man.

"I thought so, in fact I knew that this would come," he answered with a contemptuous smile. "Mr. Richard Dunsing is not the man to court a

woman for her own sake. But how will you ever tell Miss Erna? Will she be able to survive the blow?" he added, in a voice of genuine sympathy.

"I hope, on the contrary, this letter will give her strength; she will feel that she now must stand alone," replied the lady. Then casting an almost hostile look at the deserted rooms, she added: "Only let us get away from here! Away! This air oppresses me! I cannot remain any longer here, where I have so long been at home! Oh!" she suddenly burst forth, as if utterly overcome by a new horror, "Oh! if I had but fled at once, long, long ago, when I first saw the heart in its true character, that had so long pretended to love me! But, oh, my Erna! it was for your sake I determined to bear and to be silent; for your sake I endured these long years of marital unhappiness—and after all it was in vain! Now I cannot protect you from the worst, my child! I am so weak, so miserably infirm and powerless—not even the daily bread can I secure to us!"

The long pent-up bitterness of her grief had all of a sudden overflowed, breaking down the barriers of her grief and her pride—almost unconsciously she had uttered these fearful accusations. Now she as suddenly became aware of Mr. Molitor's presence, and by a truly grand effort she composed herself, and although a sudden, most violent grief seemed to have seized her, she turned to the young man and said:

"You were not to have heard these words, my

young friend. Pain, great pain, is like insanity; both make us delirious."

Moved by heartfelt sympathy, the young man seized her hand and said:

"Permit me, dear Mrs. Wigan, to honor your sorrow, for I comprehend it. My official duties make me aware of many a private tragedy, and thus I have known for some years what a deep abyss separated you and your husband."

Unutterable horror distorted the widow's features at this revelation, and she could not help saying bitterly:

"No! Do not speak of him now! He has appeared before his judge on high, and I trust, it is my fervent prayer daily, that he may have found mercy! I have borne my sufferings all these years in silence, but now and then we poor women can no longer check and restrain the angry heart. Ah! Mr. Molitor! you do not know what a fearful thing it is to look back upon a long life and to have to acknowledge that it has been a failure."

For a few moments she remained motionless, despair in all her features; then suddenly she seized the young man's hands, and fervently pressing them, she said:

"You do not know, my dear friend, what a comfort it is to know in the midst of our desolation, that there is at least one human soul that means well with us. I thank you, thank you heartily, for your kind sympathy."

Molitor led her to a chair, and she sank down ex-

hausted. They remained silent for some time, but at last the visitor thought it would be best to occupy the poor lady's mind with some other thoughts, that might lead her away from the absorbing contemplation of her own sorrow.

"May I make a suggestion, Mrs. Wigan?" he said. "You once or twice mentioned that you were quite an artist in painting and loved the occupation. Upon the strength of this, I have seen some of our leading men in that line, and two or three of them promised that they would be very happy to buy some of your work on ivory or in other, perhaps more fashionable forms, and they would pay well, they added."

"I am truly obliged to you, my dear Mr. Molitor, and I accept the offer very gratefully. First, however, we must find lodgings for myself and my daughter."

"Perhaps I can provide for that also."

"How shall I ever thank you enough for all you are doing for us, my dear Mr. Molitor? We have barely met, and yet you are already dear to me. To be sure, my own son could not have acted more lovingly in my behalf, and you take his place, you whom many would have expected to find on the opposite side, inimical to my poor husband—and his family."

"But you know, Madame, what I think in my heart about this unfortunate matter. Besides, I told you the other day, how, never knowing the blessing of parents, or of brothers and sisters, I have

grown up in most perfect solitude, and have given myself up, heart and soul, to my official duties. It is, therefore, an act of great kindness, if you permit me to draw nearer to you; it is such a comfort for me to associate with truly good and noble friends. My profession is a very sad one; it shows us almost exclusively the dark side of man's character, and I hope and trust, therefore, you will kindly permit me to assist you, and to stand by you, whenever you may need aid by counsel or by deed."

The widow made no reply, but her brightening expression showed the young man how fully she appreciated his generous offer.

"I have bespoken rooms for you, which I discovered by the merest accident. It was thus: There is in our prison, where persons are kept till their trial comes on, a socialistic mechanic, called Tibbeck, who has committed some trifling breach of the law, who is to remain in jail five weeks longer. This man, who is generally a very good fellow, gave me lately occasion to ask him if his zeal for the 'laboring classes,' as he called them, had cooled off in prison? He became talkative, and told me that in future he meant to work more and to drink less. His wife, he added, had recently inherited a little money and, following his advice, invested it in furniture for two or three rooms, which he had rented the day before. These they meant to rent out to nice tenants. He himself would go back to his handicraft, as a joiner; and thus the couple with their nearly grown daughter were looking forward

to a happier future. I do not know what it was that made me take a special, warm interest in the man's story, but the next moment I thought of you and Miss Erna. I said, of course, nothing to the man, but yesterday I made my way to Hospital Street, where he lives, and found that he had secured the second story of a nice, cheerful looking house. Mrs. Tibbeck, who seems to be a tidy, sensible woman, showed me the rooms they wish to rent out, and only asked thirty marks rent a month. As this price seemed to me reasonable, and the woman was anxious to secure good tenants,—genteel lodgers she called them—I half engaged to take the rooms, and now beg to submit the matter to your decision."

Unconsciously Mrs. Wigan's eyes filled with tears and, deeply moved, she shook the young man's hand.

"I cannot tell you how deeply I feel obliged to you," she whispered. "Certainly Erna and I will go, to-day, to secure the rooms. Ah! how happy we shall be when these wretched days come at last to an end, and we can look forward to an honest, modest life, secure in the reward of our own industry! We shall bury the Past, and pray that God may send us a peaceful Future!"

"God grant it!" said Molitor, also touched by such sweet resignation, and reverently kissed the widow's hand.

"Now I must go and see Erna. Will you come with me? I pray you will, for I am not sure but

she will take this new and unexpected change more calmly, perhaps, when you are present."

CHAPTER IX.

The investigation of the American's antecedents had on the whole a favorable result. The Consul-General of the United States, to whose protection Mr. Grover had appealed, had written home to obtain the desired information. The reports confirmed the statement made by the prisoner, that he was in his own State a highly-esteemed and very rich man; that he owned very large landed property in several parts of the Union, and was also interested in many important industrial enterprises. Only in one point the home authorities differed with his own statement. He professed to be a native American; the American officials, however, declared that, as far as was known, John Grover had come many years ago to America and was probably a native of Germany. The same fact seemed to be confirmed by his correspondence with Banker Wigan.

But it was in vain that the Judge represented to the prisoner how utterly absurd and unprofitable his denial was—only calculated to strengthen the suspicion against him. With perfectly imcomprehensible obstinacy the American maintained that he had never before in his life been in Germany, what

discrepancy there appeared he tried to explain by the fact that he was born in the Far West, in the primitive forest, far from any vestige of civilization. His parents, he said, were regular trappers, born in Germany, who had led a most adventurous, precarious life in the Indian Territory, hunting and dealing in pelts. Only when already twelve years old he, the boy, had for the first time seen a town, and he could distinctly remember with what amazement he had then beheld the din and turmoil of a city. This impression had, moreover, been so powerful, that he had returned with his parents into the wilderness and only left it for ever when a young man of twenty odd years. Then he had resided alternately on the Pacific and on the Atlantic Coast, now in San Francisco and now in New York. As the backwoodsmen of that day had not possessed the admirable inquisition of German officials, the event of his birth had probably never been duly recorded, and he was sincerely grieved that eminent German Judges and juris-consults would meet with difficulties, should they ever have to establish the fact that he, John Grover, really had been born at a certain time. He claimed, moreover, to be an emphatically self-made man, having acquired whatever little knowledge he might possess by his own unaided efforts, and having, in the course of time, by very hard work and very lucky speculations, amassed a fortune which, he ventured to say, might be called quite considerable. In vain did Judge and lawyer exert their ingenuity; the most cun-

ning and crafty questions remained unanswered. Wrapped up in his impenetrable silence, the American persevered in his policy of absolute denial. In vain he was confronted with the conductor of the car on which he had met with the accident; the watchman, also, failed to recognize him; even his voice and peculiar accent had passed entirely from his memory.

The Judge, thus foiled on all sides, began to be anxious to know what he should do with his unapproachable prisoner. He felt especially perplexed after the examination of the conductor, who confirmed Grover's statement almost in every detail. The American had really, during that fatal night, come on board the last car of the tramway leading to Seaton, and the accident had really happened. The conductor remembered the occurrence so well, because he had taken pains to explain to his late passenger—evidently a foreigner and unacquainted with the city—that he would have to be careful in getting out on the right side, as the Seaton line branched off on that side, while the other branch on the left, led in the end back to town. The only point of importance was, that the conductor had no idea of the serious character of the accident; he had seen the fallen man rise immediately and walk off quietly, and thus received the impression that no harm had been done. When asked at what time this had happened, he stated that it was his last turn at night, and consequently must have been one o'clock or shortly before.

The night watchman was even less accurate in his statement. He obstinately denied, of course, having been stupid with sleep, and the whole general appearance of the foreigner, who had been requested to put on the fur cloak he had worn that night, seemed to him to be the same as that of the nocturnal caller, but he declined to swear that John Grover and the stranger who had startled him by his sudden approach, were one and the same man.

The Judge did not for a moment doubt John Grover's guilt, and it was in compliance with his urgent demand that the accused was not allowed to furnish bail. John Grover had offered almost any amount that might be asked, and had urgently prayed not to be kept so long in close confinement. And yet the same judge, discussing the case confidentially with Molitor, confessed that he would not be greatly surprised if he should finally see himself compelled to let the man go free from want of sufficient evidence.

The Commissary of Police had, in the meantime, worked hard in another direction, and his labors had been productive of most surprising results. The instinctive suspicion which he had formed against Richard Dunsing, and which the man's ignoble conduct, as far as Erna was concerned, had greatly increased, had set him to find out if the manufacturer might not after all have received a visit from his future father-in-law on the very night on which the banker had been murdered.

Dunsing, who had been repeatedly requested

either to furnish information to the Court, or to explain his own acts in connection with the sad occurrence, had invariably denied that such a visit had taken place. Molitor, however, had quietly investigated the matter most thoroughly, and thus secured abundant evidence—mainly from factory hands—that Dunsing had, during that night, received a visitor and spent some time with him in his private rooms. This proved that Dunsing had not spoken the whole truth when he declared he had been alone in his house during that evening. It was evidently his design to keep this visit from becoming generally known ; but why ? On the other hand, none of the factory hands had recognized the visitor, although all agreed that he had looked very much like the banker. The janitor of the factory, who had closed the great iron gates immediately after the stranger had left, was positive that the latter was not the murdered man.

Smooth and slippery like an eel, the clever young man escaped every dangerous question. Even the terribly impassioned words of the banker, almost cursing his intended son-in-law, and the still stronger evidence of the slip of paper, with what was probably intended to be an advertisement in one of the leading papers, could not induce him to commit himself in the slightest. He declared that he had never heard a word of any intention on the part of the banker to break off the engagement, and admitting that he blundered in letting the notes go out of his hands, instead of merely using them as col-

laterals, he pleaded that he had expected long before they were due to be in possession of Erna's large dower and to recall the notes. Of course he admitted that the banker might have had reason to be angry with him, but he was so sure the kind and affectionate father had never for once really thought of grieving his child by such a fearful step. Mrs. Wigan, he added, had never been very kind to him, and might very well have heard things which were not really spoken.

The Judge was more or less affected by the very clever and plausible pleading of the young manufacturer, but Molitor only thought worse of his cunning, and was convinced in his heart that some part of the guilt—he knew not how much or how little—fell to Dunsing's share.

A peculiarly embarrassing feature in the whole most complicated case, was the necessity created by Molitor's official duties to investigate the relations that had existed between the banker and his wife. Molitor had gradually been admitted as a friend by the proud lady, and most highly he valued the privilege. All the more painful were to him the results of his inquiries. For it turned out, to the great surprise of almost all the friends of the family, that Mr. Wigan had for long years ceased to be that model of a faithful and devoted husband which he was generally believed to be. It was as much as sixteen years ago that the first serious rupture had taken place; the banker had soon after sold the beautiful castle on the banks of the Elbe, in

which the tragedy was reported to have taken place. Former servants testified that on a certain evening the banker had had a fearful scene with his wife; the latter had tried to flee with her three-year-old child in her arms, but the husband had used force, and for three days and nights had kept her under lock and key, refusing her all food.

From that day, Mrs. Wigan had walked quietly through life by the side of her husband, but she had never again voluntarily addressed a word to him; cold and impassive she appeared at his side. Personally, she adopted the greatest simplicity in costume and in manners; only when the dignity and the honor of the great banking-house was at stake, she stooped to appear the lady of the world. Moreover, she had in the course of years, succeeded in gathering around her, and in assembling on fixed days under her roof, a circle of gifted and interesting men, political and financial celebrities, and the parties she gave to these friends of hers had gradually become a prominent feature in the social life of the city. Self-denying, and sacrificing all for the welfare of her daughter, she had kept a warm, feeling heart for the poor and the needy. A thousand small details, which the investigation of the Commissary brought to light, bore witness to the pure, haughty, but blameless character of the lady, who spent far more upon her charities than herself. Even the daily account-book had been sequestered by the judicial authorities, and the Government-Revisers were filled with admiration for a lady, who,

in her social position, had so much money and especially so much time for the poor and the needy, while her personal expenses amounted to a mere trifle.

The pursuit of the cashier of the former banking-house remained long fruitless. Slummer seemed to have vanished. Even the large reward offered for his capture produced no result. This was regretted all the more, as every day had more clearly established the guilt of the blackguard. It was soon ascertained that he—whether acting independently or in agreement with his principal—had lost more than two million marks in the course of a few months in wildest speculations on 'Change, and had, no doubt, covered his losses by the deposits in the bank, which he alone controlled.

At last, at the moment when the Commissary of Police had abandoned all hope of capturing the criminal, there came from Baden-Baden the news that the fugitive had been overtaken. After keeping very quiet for several months, and amusing himself while concealed in the vast crowd ever surging up and down in such a city, he had yielded to the innate, irrepressible lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh, and gone South, hoping, no doubt, that the host of winter guests in Baden would enable him to remain unnoticed.

A few days after Mrs. Wigan and her daughter Erna had moved into their new, modest home,—two small but cheerful, sunlit rooms,—the cashier was brought to prison and confined in a cell. The

Judge now developed an almost feverish zeal; he at once sent for Mr. Molitor, and in his presence began to examine Slummer for several hours. The fugitive stood at bay. He soon found the evidence against him too strong to make it worth his while to attempt to refute it, but boldly and even defiantly he threw all the blame upon the murdered banker, declaring that he had only obeyed his employer's express orders in speculating on 'Change. He also maintained not to have had the slightest suspicion that their enormous losses were covered by the dishonest use of money entrusted to the bank. All these subterfuges, however, availed him nothing; he had had, alone, control over all sums paid in as deposits, and the clerks that had been examined, had with one accord stated that Slummer was not the man to become a mere tool in Mr. Wigan's hands.

The impudent, vulgar manner of the ex-cashier produced naturally a most unfavorable impression upon both the Judge and the Commissary. But even more painful was the effect of his offer to become useful to the authorities, if they would accept his revelations. When he was asked what he had to reveal, he added that he knew more about the murder of Banker Wigan than they, and might be able to disclose the real culprit, if the court would engage to let him go free. As a matter of course, such a bargain was out of question.

Nevertheless, his words had made a deep impression upon Molitor, who could not free himself of the

thought that Slummer himself might have had a share in the tragic end of the banker. He thought this all the more probable as the cashier must have been in daily dread lest his employer should, any morning, discover the enormous robberies of which he had gradually become guilty. He had, no doubt, like all such unfortunate men, begun on a small scale only, and then ventured on, more and more boldly, impelled by the absurd hope that, by a larger venture, he might cover all the previous losses. What more natural than that, unable to bear the constant, daily increasing fear, he should at last have determined by one bold blow, to free himself of all apprehension for the future?

It was, of course, a formidable suspicion, cherished by the Commissary of Police, although as yet unsupported by any evidence at all, and every argument that spoke against John Grover was, by so much, in favor of Slummer. The more Molitor reflected on Grover's presumed guilt, the less he found his mind disposed to believe in it. It was evident that some profound mystery surrounded the relations between John Grover and the banker; it was proven, also, that the two men had met on that fatal evening in the banker's villa and had left it together; but, supposing the tracks to be correctly identified, nothing was proven as yet, except the mere fact of their being together at that place. The defective sole, well provided with heavy nails, was the one piece of evidence that constantly occupied the officer's mind. He tried to compare, without being seen, the sole of

Slummer's boots with the drawing of the track which he possessed. Slummer had a large, ill-shapen foot, and the two tracks had nothing in common. The question arose, however: Could the man not have worn other shoes or boots on that evening—possibly for the very purpose of thus avoiding suspicion?

Molitor was indefatigable in his researches, and even went to Slummer's former lodgings; but all he there ascertained was, that the cashier at one time had possessed a pair of worn-out shoes, that were unusually heavy and well protected with nails. For the present the Commissary kept these meagre results to himself, for he felt that he did not yet see quite clear enough himself, to convince others, and among them so clear-sighted a man as Judge Feilen was. He determined, however, to keep a watchful eye on Slummer, and as the control over the prison was part of his duty, this was an easy task. The very next day after Slummer's first important examination, Molitor appeared there and ordered the prisoner Tibbeck to be brought before him.

The journeyman-joiner was a man of about forty, whose appearance was such as to awake confidence, and whose face, in a frame of a full, reddish-brown beard, would have been handsome, if he had been able to look steadily and boldly in any man's face. His eyes, however, were unsteadily wandering all the while from one place to another, and made the man look insincere and untrustworthy.

"Look, Tibbeck," began the Commissary, "here

is a chance for you to do a handsome thing and to earn a little money at the same time! Of course, you have heard of Banker Wigan's sad fate?"

The man slowly nodded his head. It looked as if he most carefully avoided meeting the officer's eye, but the latter, who knew his peculiarity, paid little heed.

"I have not thought much about that," he replied, in a hoarse, low voice. "I only read something about it, once, in the newspapers—a reward of a thousand marks was offered."

"Exactly so!" affirmed Molitor, affectionately resting his hand on the shoulder of his old acquaintance. "They think that immense sums have been spirited away, and this has led the creditors of the bankrupt firm to offer so large a reward—well, what are you trembling for, that way? Why, man! what is the matter with you of a sudden?" and he took his hand from the prisoner's shoulder.

"Oh, nothing! nothing! I am not trembling. I do not know what it was, but a shudder came all at once over me—I could not help it—I was thinking how some people spend their money—and people like ourselves—"

"Ah! what have I to do with your misanthropic views?" cried Molitor laughing. "You had better listen to me and hear how you may become a rich man. You must know, Tibbeck, I suspect that man Slummer—who has been captured at last, after giving our detectives a nice run over the whole Empire—of being still in possession of large amounts

which he won hy his speculations. Now, I want to make you an offer. I want you to be put in the same cell with this former cashier and—"

"Alas! I am no good as a spy, Mr. Molitor; really not!" broke in the journeyman, eagerly. "I may be a cursed bad fellow, but a spy! No, I am not so bad as that!"

"I should like to know what there is bad in unmasking a blackguard of the deepest dye?" Molitor replied with some severity in his voice. "On the contrary, you can do a good work, and you ought to count it an honor to be trusted in this way. I do not generally treat my prisoners with such confidence."

"Well, you need not be so angry at once; I only meant to say—"

"Pshaw! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir! Did you never hear anybody speak of the banker's poor widow and his orphan daughter? Those two ladies are suffering sorely; they have to work hard to earn their daily bread, and they might be greatly relieved if we could find out where those large amounts of money are now concealed. You will be interested, by the way, to hear that those two ladies are now lodgers in your house."

Tibbeck made no reply but merely stared at the Commissary as if he had told him a piece of incredible news.

"Yes, yes!" said the Commissary, nodding at the man, "I mean well with you! I have gotten your wife two highly respectable ladies as lodgers. They

moved in yesterday, and to-night I shall call upon them at your house and see how they like it." But he suddenly broke off here, and asked him: "But what is the matter with you, my man?"

Tibbeck's whole appearance had changed most wonderfully; his features looked distorted and his eyes were rolling more unsteadily than ever in their orbits. "What, the lady—Mrs. Wigan herself!" he at last uttered, evidently with a great effort. "She is staying at my house? She, Mrs. Wigan, did you say? She is staying at my house? She, and her daughter too?"

"Well, what is there in that to make you stare at me as if you were seeing ghosts? You ought to be glad that I could get such help for your wife."

"No, no! That will never do!" stammered Tibbeck, almost frenzied.

"But why not," asked the Commissary, drawing back a step and looking surprised. "What on earth frightens you so, man? Why not Mrs. Wigan and her daughter?"

Now the prisoner seemed to recover himself.

"Oh! It is nothing! Shere nonsense!" he said with his feeble laughter. "But, just fancy—who would have thought it possible! Mrs. Wigan, in my house! She!" And then he looked again, timidly and evidently terrified, at Molitor. "And you say they are badly off, the two ladies? What is the matter with them?"

"Badly off, indeed!" said the Commissary, misinterpreting his question. "But as to your rent—you

need not fear. The ladies are so situated that they can make their living in a very respectable manner."

"Ah! That is not the question!" replied the prisoner, almost contemptuously. And then he continued in a much improved manner: "You are right. Those rascals deserve to have their rascality revealed. Put me in the man's cell—I'll find him out quickly enough! And as to the reward of which you are talking—of course it would be welcome, for there is my poor wife, slaving all day long, and my little Lina, who wants to get married in the Autumn."

"Well then, that is settled," said the Commissary. "I'll give the necessary orders at once. You are relieved of your present duties, and will remain in that man Slummer's cell. In a fortnight your time is up, and by that time I dare say you will have found out a great many things.

CHAPTER X.

On the same evening on which he had this interview with the journeyman, Molitor went with hurried steps down the long, uniform streets of the city, to pay Mrs. Wigan and her young daughter his first visit in their new home. Mrs. Tibbeck, a tidy, nicely dressed little woman, with a face beaming with kindness and goodness of heart, received him at the door, and showed him the way to the ladies' room. He found both seated on a sofa, a round table

with a suspension lamp before them, and both engaged in some kind of pretty handiwork. They rose as he entered, and the widow most heartily welcomed the young official, while Erna was standing aside, rather timidly.

"I hope I do not intrude," asked the Commissary, after he had taken a seat and cast a comprehensive glance around at the modestly but comfortably furnished room.

"Not in the least, for a good friend is always welcome," answered the mother; "we were just speaking of the past."

"You ought not to do that, dear Mrs. Wigan," said the young man, modestly. "It is better to banish the dismal shadows of the past, and to look forward hopefully into the future."

"What we recalled were not exactly unpleasant memories," continued the widow, after a moment's hesitating reflection. "I was telling my daughter of my youthful days. My present modest surroundings had suddenly carried me back, for some twenty years ago I found myself in a like room; although, of course, at that time I was young, and looked joyously at life, while now I have to fight the battle of life in earnest."

She passed her hand over her brow, and sank deeper back into the soft arm-chair, in which Molitor had found her so often in better days—one of the few relics saved from the wreck.

"If I did not have my dear, sweet Erna, and enjoyed her companionship and her love as she little

imagines, I should be ready to tear the leaves containing the history of the last twenty years, and of my married life, willingly from the book of my life, as if they had never been. For, strange as it seems, the same cares, the same fear and anxiety which I had then, oppress me now again."

"Yes," she added, reading in her visitor's face astonishment and expectation, "yes, that makes you wonder, I see. But I may confess to you that I have not always enjoyed great wealth—are you not by this time as near to us as if you were a member of our family?"

"Your confidence, Mrs. Wigan, makes me very, very happy," said the visitor, evidently much pleased.

"And why should I not give you my whole confidence," she continued after a short pause; "do you think I have not noticed how you and my own daughter have of late many a time wondered what might be going on in my mind? Perhaps you thought I was harsh and even unjust to my husband, when I spoke rather severely of him who has been taken from us so suddenly and so tragically. Your unflagging and energetic interest in our well-being has won you a right to know who they are for whom you have so loyally done so much, and as I happen to be in the humor, and memories arise before my mind's eye that had better be banished forever by an open confession, I will tell you all. I shall, however, speak only of persons who have departed this life, of human hearts as withered and dead as my own happiness—forever!

"I, also, was once a happy girl, free from care, and the daughter of an official who indefatigably and most faithfully performed his duties, and yet only earned enough to support his family decently. Brothers and sisters of mine are scattered about in the world; not one of them has been as fortunate as I was during the long years of my married life. My father died, and my poor mother, with nothing to support her but a small pension, saw herself compelled to leave the capital and to rent a cottage in Beaufort, a small town not far from here, where beautiful forests and good hotels attracted a number of summer-boarders. Let me be brief! My friends discovered a talent for painting in me, and I was delighted to be able to contribute a trifle to our household expenses, and thus to secure some relief to my poor, careworn mother. The sale of my work led to the house of your future father, dear Erna," she added, turning to her daughter, who was hanging on her mother's words with intense, breathless interest. "But he was not the first to make a deep impression on my heart.

"Your father had an elder brother, two years older than he was. Johannes—this was his name—was a highly-gifted, brilliant man, with an almost fiery enthusiasm for all that was noble and sublime, an enemy to vice in any shape, and I, young and inexperienced, lost my heart to him as soon as I knew him. I cannot weary you with all the fearful struggles I had in my bosom, for however little I knew of the world, this much I saw, that a union

between us was out of the question. Imagine then, my horror, when I discovered soon that Johannes also had conceived a liking for me. The world said at that time that I was pretty."

"No, mamma, no! You are pretty still! You are the fairest woman I have ever known," cried Erna, and jumping up from her chair, she embraced her mother, showing for the first time once more a sunlit smile on her lovely though pale features.

"You little flatterer!" said the mother, almost reproachfully. "What will Mr. Molitor think of you?"

The poor young girl blushed all over and sat down again in the shadow of the lamp, but could not help laughing aloud as she saw the young official's encouraging glances.

"Johannes' parents owned a large landed estate, and his father was, moreover, president of the bank which my husband afterwards managed. Theodore, your father, dear Erna, was at that time expected back from England, where the old people had a branch-bank under his direction. But all my hesitancy, all my reluctance vanished in a moment, when Johannes confessed to me his love. He spoke so simply and truthfully, his words charmed me like bewitching music; and even now, after all my bitter experience of life, and all my grievous sufferings, I can hear his voice and look into his dark, love-tuned eyes, however long they may now be closed to sleep for all eternity." She paused here several seconds. But then, forcibly recovering

herself, she continued: "We became secretly engaged, for Johannes succeeded in putting aside all my objections and displayed before my mind's eye such an enchanting picture, such an ever sunny May-day of life, that I could not resist. But it was not to be so. There came a day, a truly fearful day, when I learned that the wealth of my future father-in-law was by no means as solid and as safe as it had been represented. The old man had engaged in speculations which had turned out disastrous. And just at this time the father of the young lady whom the family council had long since destined for Johannes, became impatient and urged a speedy decision. My secret lover could not dare, in this crisis, to oppose the will of his parents openly, but he also did not yield altogether—very cunningly he managed to postpone the catastrophe from day to day. But when we met in secret and were alone fear and trembling came over us, and we felt that the beginning of the end was nigh at hand.

"And it came as a thief in the night. We had once more met secretly, and Johannes was lamenting over our misfortunes and almost yielded to despair. His parents had insisted upon a final decision, and the father of his intended bride had used intolerable language. A terrible scene had taken place. Johannes had remained faithful to me, but confessed that he saw no hope for our union. I was hanging, in tears, on his neck—my heart told me it was the last time that we thus stood, arm in arm, in pure, unselfish love, never to meet again.

"All of a sudden our silent sorrow was rudely broken in upon by the loud, scolding voice of a man. Amazed and terrified, I turned my head, and there stood a rough, uncouth looking man, with fiery wrath in his eyes. One word from Johannes' lips explained all: the intruder was the father of the girl who was to become Johannes' wife. But there was still another man present—and he a traitor!"

The widow suddenly broke off here; she sprang up, concealing her face behind her hands; the recollection overcame her; the excitement was too much for her—she turned pale and red by turns and became for a moment unconscious. Erna, in her terror, seized her hand, and cried:

"Dear, dear mamma! what is it? you must not be so excited."

Molitor, also, painfully affected by the incident, and all of a sudden reading the mystery of the unhappy, lacerated heart of the widow quite clearly, joined his prayers to those of the young girl.

"Oh, it is nothing, nothing!" at last said Mrs. Wigan. "The memory of the past overcame me for an instant. I think I see him even now before me, that vile traitor, that second Cain—but, no!" she said, suddenly breaking off and looking with tenderest pity at the imploring eyes of her child—"no! you shall not be deprived of your childlike faith in true love!" she murmured with trembling lips.

The Commissary looked at her, deeply moved.

"And, of course, you knew this—this other man?" he said, after the widow had resumed her seat.

An imploring glance from the beautiful eyes swept by him to rest upon the young girl, and at the same time she laid her forefinger on her lips.

Molitor understood what he had suspected was certainty. How deeply he pitied the poor woman! How grievously he had misjudged her!

"No, I could not recognize that man," the mother continued, forcing herself to be quiet. "He withdrew into the shade and the evening was a dark and cloudy Fall evening. But I felt that he was a traitor, and that it was he who had urged on that raging fiend to break in upon our meeting. Oh! Great God! How much might I have been spared, how different my whole life might have become, if I had then been able to pierce the darkness and to read that man's true character! But hush! He is standing now before God's judgment seat, and He will have mercy on him! And, besides, I have you, my dear, dear child!" she quickly added, seizing the hands of the young girl, who closely clung to her mother.

"The scene that followed was terrific," Mrs. Wigan continued, shuddering still. "In a few minutes the whole life of two human beings was planned and prepared. In a fearful rage the old man seized his son by the breast, and I saw the fire blaze up in the eyes of my beloved—a fire as fierce and as fatal as that of the baneful lightning when it suddenly flashes forth from dark, black clouds, carrying ruin and devastation everywhere. I cannot, even to-day, tell what really happened. I fancied I saw the

sheen of a dagger gleam in the darkness—then a short, deadly rattle in the throat—a half-suppressed cry of anguish. Then did I see two men writhing on the ground. I fled, barely conscious that the man who had stood hiding in the darkest corner, threw himself upon the two adversaries. I fled and left all my love and all my hope and all my happiness behind me, never—never—to see it again."

"Great God! my dear Mrs. Wigan, what you must have suffered!" exclaimed Molitor, deeply touched and seizing her hands. "I presume it came to blows—did your Johannes allow himself to be tempted by the Evil One, did he?"

Mrs. Wigan passed her hand over her brow, as if to drive away dark, dismal dreams and to return to reality; then she said:

"Yes, the worst had happened," she murmured weakly, unable to lend her voice the usual firmness. "Johannes, who was naturally rash and impulsive, had lost his self-control when the old man inflicted a heavy blow right on his face. Unconscious of what he was doing, he drew a large clasp-knife, which he unfortunately always carried about him. In an instant his hand was raised—and the next moment it was buried in the man's breast. At least this was what I was told at a later time. Later, for on my return to my mother's house, pale unto death and frightened beyond all power of recovery, I was already delirious, and weeks, months passed before our excellent doctor rescued me from the grasp of

the disease and enabled me once more to behold the bright light of day.

"But then new horrors were lying in wait for me. My late husband had first of all discovered the murder and taken care to let his brother escape before the terrible deed became known; for a few minutes after the stab had been inflicted, the poor man had succumbed. Johannes fled, amply provided with pecuniary means by his brother; but he, also, only fled to meet death. On the journey to Hamburg a fearful railway disaster overtook him; more than a hundred human beings, and he one of them, perished in the disaster. His remains, mere fragments of the terribly mutilated body, would never have been recognized, if, as by a miracle, his papers had not been preserved. He was buried secretly."

Here the poor lady's voice gave out; sobs alone broke from the lips of the woman who was generally so courageous. Once more Erna closely hung upon the bosom of her mother. It was a touching sight to witness the efforts of the loving daughter to soothe her poor, disconsolate mother's grief, as she imploringly looked up to her with glances of warmest affection.

"It was certainly a cruel fate, my dear Mrs. Wigan, to be thus tried; but pray, think, on the other hand, how fortunate it was that Heaven itself interfered and removed the unfortunate friend of your younger days."

"Yes, it was fortunate," she replied composedly,

but a weird light shone in her eyes, "poor Johanne's heart was so trustful, so overflowing with love, that he never even conceived the wickedness of men. I myself only learned, many years later—alas! it was a fearful day, never to be forgotten!—how thoroughly corrupt the heart of Man can be. I forgot to tell you that a large reward was offered for the capture of Johannes. As I told you, I was confined for many months to my bed—but for that, I should have justified him in the eyes of the world and protected him against this fearful charge of being a murderer. My Johannes, my noble, great-hearted Johannes, a murderer!" She groaned painfully, and hid her face in her hands. "But appearances were against him; a devil had cunningly concocted the whole scheme. Assuming a mask of love and devotion, he had managed to deceive the poor victim of his malice; he had conjured up again an early difficulty that had arisen between Johannes and the murdered man."

Erna looked up, terrified.

"Great God! Of whom are you speaking, mother?" she cried. "Who is that uncanny, terrible man, who intruded thus upon your love and destroyed your life's happiness?"

But the poor, suffering woman shuddered and with anxious affection she pressed Erna's head to her bosom, as if she wished to prevent her from looking into her eyes.

"Do not ask me, child!" she answered. "All is over now, and I ought not to conjure up the dead

who are resting in their graves. But, as I said, appearances were against Johannes; no one was there to defend him, and the courts decided accordingly. A few irate words that had been overheard by servants, and some violent utterances against the deceased, strengthened the suspicion that the deed was not the result of self-defense, but of long-cherished hatred. As a murderer he was pursued, and this curse, to have died a murderer in his sins, still clings to his name at this day, and disgraces his grave, that is so dear to me. Not even a simple stone they would allow me to place over his remains! Oh! men are cruel! They have driven from this earth the memory of one of the bravest and noblest of men!

"My life, for a time, went on quietly. Hope and Love were dead in me. The world praised my beauty. I would not be fair, since he was not there to enjoy my beauty who alone had called my heart his own, who even now, after all these tempestuous days, possesses my heart in unchanging affection. My mother grew weaker. I had to do double work to support us both. At last a day came when she lay down 'to rest a little'—in reality, never to rise again. Just then, my dear Erna, your father came and tried to win my heart; he confessed that he had loved me long since, but had waited for the death of his parents to be independent when offering me his hand and his fortune. I told him frankly that I could not give him the love he expected, but that I esteemed him highly ever since I had seen him

stand by his brother in that unfortunate hour. As I hesitated to become his, because such a step looked to me like a breach of faith due to his brother, he went to my mother, and she, in her last moments, besought me to consent, and when she had joined our hands and uttered a short prayer, she closed her eyes and her soul returned to its Maker.

"Thus it was not love," continued Mrs. Wigan, after a long, deep silence, which neither of the young people dared break, "that bound me to my husband. I must confess it—and I hope I do not wrong the departed—I had no genuine, sacred love to give him, and he was not the man to awake it in his own heart, for he was a man of this world only and his business was his god. But the farther we started apart in the course of years, the fewer the points became that were common to both of us, the more I saw that his honor was blameless. Never, although he no doubt often and often lost sight of the line that separates strictly honest business from venturesome speculation—never did he enrich himself illegally with a farthing, never did he touch other people's property with covetous hands. The most scrupulous honesty governed all his actions."

"Now I know," here broke in Erna, clinging closely to her mother's side, "why you are so often sad and cast down, my dear Mamma; you are thinking of Johannes, the unhappy, ill-treated victim of circumstances!"

Mrs. Wigan mournfully bowed her head and replied:

"Yes, for in all the years of my opulent, outwardly happy life, memory would not leave me. Every year I went to that retired little village, which the railway leaves unnoticed, and where the grave of my dear one attracts me irresistibly. At this sacred place I always found new strength to bear all the ills of my unhappy married life, and on my return I had only to look into your eyes, my dear child,—they are his eyes—and I was happy once more, though but for a moment."

"Poor, poor Johannes!" said the young girl. "But how came it that I never heard of him? Nothing in our house ever reminded us of him; there was not even a portrait there."

"There exists but one single likeness of Johannes," said the mother, "and I, who have painted it myself, also carry it about my person, always looking upon it as a talisman."

With these words she drew from the upper part of her dress an old-fashioned locket, suspended on a slight gold chain. She opened it and showed the two young people the pastel portrait of a young man, who was looking boldly and confidently into the world.

The Commissary had no sooner glanced at it than he cried out:

"Great Heavens! what a likeness!" But then, when he saw the two ladies look at him surprised and wondering, he paused in confusion. "Oh! It is nothing," he added; "but I think the two brothers

must really have resembled each other much, when they were young."

"By no means," replied the widow, "only a certain family likeness; Johannes' features were cut far more boldly and nobly. With his prominent Roman nose, his free brow and the frank, honest expression of his face, he was the ideal of a handsome, honest man."

She paused and seemed absorbed in the contemplation of the little portrait.

"Will you permit me one more look at it?" asked Molitor and, holding it in his hand, he bent over it and examined it long and searchingly. "It is indeed a valuable specimen of the great skill of goldsmiths in days gone by."

"I owe you now another confession," continued the widow, "now that we are sitting here so cozily. Forming as it were but one family, I can speak of many things which before I could never mention. This locket, I told you, I almost hold sacred as a talisman, and therefore I was afraid it might be taken from me and desecrated at the time of the terrible calamity, if I had told you then that the watch which the deceased wore and this locket are remarkably alike. Of course the watch is somewhat larger and more massive, to hold and protect the works, but otherwise both are almost identical specimens of the goldsmith's skill."

"That is indeed most precious evidence," exclaimed the Commissary, greatly rejoiced, "for in spite of the most careful researches at all the dealers

in such articles, pawnbrokers and others, we have not been able to detect the smallest trace of the watch."

"The explanation is easy enough," continued the lady; "watch and locket are two heirlooms, which my husband's family has kept together for several generations. Johannes had at that time the locket; while my husband inherited the watch from his grandfather. In that sacred hour, when our hearts met never to part again upon earth, Johannes gave me the locket, as the most precious thing he owned, begging me ever to wear it upon me, by day and by night. 'As long as you do not part with this jewel,' he said to me, 'so long shall I know, and were I lying in my grave, that you are mine in truth and in spirit.' I have worn it all my life since, and never shown it even to my own, sweet child; but every evening I took it out and gazed at it, till it seemed to me as if the portrait was going to open its lips and to speak to me of bygone happy days. And surely I did not wrong my husband by this, for to love a dead man and to honor his memory—that cannot be wrong!"

"My dear Mrs. Wigan," said Molitor, "I can not tell you how happy you make me by allowing me this insight into your inner life. You have had to pass through cruel trials and seen bitter days, but let us hope that soon the time of tribulation will be gone and peace and happiness will return."

"Alas! there is little prospect just now for such a change," said the widow, shaking her head.

"If God would grant me only the one consolation of seeing my dear, sweet child provided for life, I myself am resigned and hope for nothing any more, but Erna—"

The three people who found themselves suddenly drawn so near to each other, spent nearly the whole evening together in earnest conversation. But when the Commissary at last said Good-bye and stepped out into the dark street, the soft April wind had changed into a furious tempest, and a like change took place in his face. The gentle, encouraging smile that he had shown the two ladies disappeared in an instant and black care dwelt in every line. A new thought had sprung up in his mind which threatened to give to the investigation of John Grover's life an entirely different turn, and with it, a new and absorbing interest.

CHAPTER XI.

Molitor had a sleepless night. It had required a great effort in the evening to conceal his surprise when Mrs. Wigan showed him the sacredly guarded portrait of her murdered husband's brother. It represented, of course, a young and handsome man in the springtime of life, but the features were so very marked and so peculiar that they impressed themselves instantly and forever on his mind's eyes.

Exactly the same haughty Roman nose, the same masterly, determined eyes, the same colossal and marble-like brow, the same countenance, only covered by the hand of Time with lines and wrinkles, and the chin covered with a luxuriant reddish beard, he had watched hour after hour, when examining his prisoner, John Grover!

Over-excited by the unexpected discovery, and utterly bewildered by this entirely new complication, he lay tossing and twisting on his weary couch. A thousand thoughts chased each other wildly in his mind, and a most painful uncertainty as to his precise duty under the circumstances harassed him almost intolerably. He felt, vaguely but forcibly, the antagonism that would arise between his loving heart on one side and stern duty on the other. For he could no longer conceal it from himself: he loved Erna! The sweet, winsome young girl had bewitched him almost at first sight, and those blue eyes, so full of deep inner life and heartfelt love, went with him, most welcome companions, wherever he was. Not a word he had said as yet of the wound in his heart and the hopes he ventured to cherish—he respected the injury done to Erna's feelings by Dunsing's vile withdrawal, although he was convinced that she also, like her mother, had submitted to a plot concocted by wretched conspirators, ready to sacrifice her own happiness to the wishes of loving, but misguided parents. It was the young man's ambition to speak not yet, but first to act, and by his actions to prove himself

worthy of the priceless pearl he wished to possess. It was a proud consciousness which he secretly cherished in his bosom, that the fate of these two poor ladies was entrusted to him. If he should succeed in convicting the cashier, and in compelling him to surrender at least a part of the stolen money, there was hope that the widow might recover a modest portion of her husband's wealth, for he never believed that more than one half of the whole amount stolen could have been lost by speculations on 'Change in the course of a few months.

But in the midst of such bright hopes and happy anticipations the revelation of last night had all of a sudden displayed the "rift in the lute." The past unexpectedly rose in gigantic outlines to part the ladies and the Commissary. In vain did Molitor search his memory, in vain did he employ all the efficient means at his disposal in his official capacity —he had never heard of a crime committed by a member of the Wigan family, he could nowhere find a trace of such an occurrence in the annals of Justice. But now—if a crime had been committed, and if the pretended American, John Grover, was in reality the fugitive brother, Johannes Wigan, then it was certainly his solemn duty to tear the mask from the face of the man who had returned under a false name and a false flag, and to hand him over to Justice. And then—was not in that case all hope lost ever to call Erna his own?

The Commissary saw no way out of this difficulty, and his mind took daily darker views of the situ-

ation. John Grover must be Banker Wigan's brother! And if this was so, many a riddle was solved. Evidently the two brothers had kept up a correspondence, and in order to secure themselves against any danger of discovery, they had not only sent all their letters marked "To be called for," but had also notified each other, before sending a letter, by an advertisement in a certain paper agreed upon. This notice was, moreover, always given in cipher. The fact that John Grover was the banker's elder brother, was evidently the secret that bound them to each other, and the motive for the return of the American, who had no longer been able to resist the longing for home. This explained the great precautions they took in their intercourse, the mysterious "secret" interview in the Hotel Metropole, and the nocturnal meeting at Seaton. On the other hand, however, how was it possible that one brother should murder the other, especially since there was every evidence that they were most affectionately devoted to each other, as their correspondence also proved abundantly.

At last, towards morning, the young man fell asleep, still seeing Erna's image standing before him, looking like an angel, but sadly gazing at him. and when he tried to seize the hem of her garment, she vanished as if she had been of air. He felt as if all his strength had gone from him, and this paralyzing influence continued to oppress him even after he had fully roused himself to engage once more in official duties.

He displayed now a matchless energy, determined as he was to solve the mystery, not for his own sake only, but prompted by an ardent desire to assist the poor ladies. As yet he did not tell them what discovery he had made, for the widow would have been overwhelmed with pain and distress upon hearing that the man she had loved and so long faithfully mourned was alive, but as John Grover, held a prisoner and charged with murder! In the meantime he had all the old records of the Criminal Court brought to his office, and most diligently sought among the *causes célèbre* for the fatal name. At last he found, in the year 1864, an advertisement offering a very large reward for the capture of Johannes Wigan, followed by a minute description of his person. Then, perhaps a year later, he came across another such offer of "Reward" for the capture of the railway laborer by whose unpardonable negligence the train had been wrecked in which Johannes Wigan had been going to Hamburg, and amid the wreck of which he was buried. At least, this was presumed by the authorities who investigated the affair. A fearfully mutilated and partly destroyed body was found, and in some clothes that seemed to belong to him papers were found that belonged to one Johannes Wigan, with a passport for the United States.

The next volumes contained no notice of the event or the men who had perished on that occasion. But, some years later, Molitor came across a renewed offer of "Reward" for the delivery to the

authorities of the aforesaid Johannes Wigan. This was, however, the last mention of that name, and the authorities had evidently abandoned all hope of recovering the criminal.

A few weeks more and prescription would have protected the fugitive from justice against all legal pursuit. Even if he had not been buried as one of the victims of that railway disaster, he was now at liberty to return to his native country, without the slightest fear of being held responsible for the crime of which he was suspected. Was this perhaps the secret which made John Grover so excessively cautious and reserved, so that he weighed every word before he uttered it carefully.

"Perhaps this was the reason why he so obstinately refused to answer any question as to his past."

After a short reflection the Commissary determined to venture upon a bold step, to go to the prisoner in his cell and boldly to accuse him of being Johannes Wigan He found the American as sad and melancholy as usual.

It was the best cell of which the keeper had the right to dispose; certain simple comforts even were not wanting. Thus the prisoner sat in a comfortable arm-chair, facing the window with its iron bars, and watching the scenes in the court-yard below, where at that moment some prisoners were allowed to take exercise. He glanced at the door, and as he recognized the Commissary, he merely nodded lightly. Molitor was not discouraged, however, by this reception, and walked straight up to the

prisoner. "How are you, Mr. Johannes Wigan?" he suddenly asked in a pointed manner, watching at the same time the expression in the American's features most sharply.

The prisoner turned round as if bitten by a snake. The lost drop of blood seemed to leave his face and his eyes wandered helplessly around in the cell, as if in search of protection from a terrific blow. Then he looked steadily at the man who was standing, towering over him, before his chair.

This fearful consternation, however, lasted but a moment; then the usual contemptuous smile once more curled his lips, and he said, attentively looking at his adversary: "I do not understand you, Commissary. Whom do you mean? Are you not mistaken about the name?"

"Why will you try to deceive me, Mr. Wigan? Your fright betrayed you at once!" answered Molitor in a subdued but very impressive tone.

"And what has my fright to do with that name? Perhaps because you thought it would startle me? Well, I am willing to confess—my thoughts were afar off, far from this inhospitable country, and when I so suddenly neard the name of my so-called victim, Wigan, I only heard this name and was frightened involuntarily."

Molitor looked at him seriously and reproachfully as he said: "Spite of all that goes against you, I always thought you to be a man of honor, and such a man does not lie."

"Sir!" cried the pseudo-American in a fury, but

a calming motion of Molitor's hand seemed at once to pacify him and he sank back again into his chair.

"Pray listen to me!" continued the Commissary. "I think I see now clearly how matters stand; but before I make my official report to my superiors, I should like to discuss them frankly with you. You have, I am told, in a fit of hot anger, in which you were delirious, killed another man with a knife. It may be that in the first great excitement you thought you would be condemned for murder, and, really, a suspicion must have existed to warrant the issue of the offer of reward for your capture in the year 1864. You had escaped, however, and as probably another man had obtained possession of your passport and other papers, before he perished in that great railway disaster, that man had been interred in your name. You fled to America, and there rose by your industry to become a millionaire; but the longing after your old home left you no peace.

"You had kept up some intercourse with your brother. He advised you not to come to Germany. I see this from the Hamburg letter, in which you do not share his apprehensions. You defied these fears, came over and had several secret interviews with your brother. Seeing now that we know all this, had you not better consent to make an open confession? Had you not better say: 'Yes, I am Johannes Wigan, and I submit to your sentence.' Who knows but the jury would be very lenient, or

would acquit you altogether, as your crime is long since condoned by prescription,—that brother should murder brother, is hardly known ever to have occurred," the Commissary concluded, looking very sharply and piercingly at his prisoner.

But not a muscle in the American's face moved. He bore the searching glance of the officer calmly and firmly; his features looked as if they were cast in steel.

"That is a very pretty story, my dear sir," he replied at last; only I do not see what I, John Grover, have to do with it. It is very humane in you to speak so kindly to me, and to give me such good advice, and I am very much obliged to you for your kindness. But I do not need it. This farce will soon be played out; they will, they must set me free!"

Molitor was disappointed; he had hoped to make a very different impression. Now that the American, like a skillful fencer, had warded off the bold attack, he felt a little discouraged. But this lasted only a few moments; then his full self-control returned, and he instantly devised a new form of attack.

"I am sorry for that, Mr. Grover—since I must call you so as long as you repudiate the other name—" he began once more, "I had hoped my words would have induced you to confess the whole truth, at least for the sake of the poor widow and her orphaned daughter."

He at once noticed that these words of his were

not without effect. There came flashes of sinister fire to the American's eyes, and although still full of distrust, he yet went so far as to ask:

"What do you mean by that? What have the two women to do with it?" and the Commissary felt as if the man's voice was quite unsteady.

"Well, the banker's death has exposed them to sore trials," answered Molitor, and at once determined to tell all to his prisoner, who had so long been entirely cut off from all intercourse with the outer world. In a few, concise sentences, never taking his eyes from the prisoner's face, he told him all that had happened. He thought he noticed that the longer he spoke, the greater was the excitement of his adversary in this strange kind of a duel.

"You say she is poor and she suffers, she and her child?" cried the American at last, when Molitor had finished his report.

"So it is," he answered, "she lives by the industry of her hands. Weakly and sickly as she is, worn out by grief, it is feared she will not last long."

"Oh! Poor, poor Ada!" John Grover suddenly exclaimed, beating his forehead.

The Commissary at once took advantage of these words.

"You are mentioning there a name which I have not before heard you use. I have purposely abstained from telling you Mrs. Wigan's first name —how do you know it, and especially in its shortened form? No doubt you used that name once yourself in this affectionate form?"

But by this time the American had his whole armour on again. With hard, fierce obstinacy he met Molitor's penetrating looks.

"Pshaw! Nonsense! You wanted to catch me! I meet cunning with cunning! That name came up quite accidentally. I do not know this woman and never knew her. Once more, I tell you the family are strangers to me! I am in Germany for the first time now, and what more can I tell you?"

Molitor was bitterly disappointed. He had hoped great things from this new attack.

"Well, then," he said, turning away, "settle that with your conscience, Mr. John Grover. I meant well with you. Now I shall prove, against your will, that you are Johannes Wigan, reputed dead."

As he was leaving the room, he turned once more back in the door, and was startled at the great change in the face of the American, who thought himself unobserved. A whole world of grief and misery was expressed in his features. Of a sudden he rose, and approaching the door he whispered hoarsely:

"One word, Mr. Commissary!"

Molitor's heart beat high. Had he at last found access to the American?

"I am a rich man, Mr. Molitor," continued the American, hastily and without looking at the official, "I do not wish to hear that the family of the man whom I am accused of having killed should suffer. Am I at liberty to dispose of my money? I should like to send the two ladies a few thousand dollars."

The Commissary shook his head.

"The one kindness which under the circumstances you can show them is Truth, the whole truth, the only thing fit for your dignity as a man."

"And nothing else—I can do?" said the American almost to himself, and a violent struggle evidently took place in his heart. He looked almost imploringly at the officer, and as the latter shook his head, denying the favor, he burst out:

"Well, then, take it upon your own conscience! I will say no more. I am John Grover, and there is an end of it!"

And there was. Molitor, disappointed and indignant at the conduct of the man whom he believed to be the lost Johannes Wigan, left the cell. He went into the public room and sent for the journeyman.

"Well," he said hopefully, "have you done what I expected? have you anything to tell me?"

He started, however, at the man's face. Until now it had not been unpleasant to him, because, in spite of the shy looks in his eyes, the man spoke with a certain air of openness and candor. But this had disappeared, and now the face looked downright repulsive. Suddenly he was amazed at himself; how could he ever have trusted this man, who now looked as if he bore Cain's mark.

"I do not know. I do not like playing the spy. I wish you would not send me back to that man's cell. Such a gentleman and I—we don't suit each other," was the man's answer.

"In prison all are alike; all wear the same cap and the same clothes," the Commissary told him angrily. "And you really refuse to do something to help those poor ladies? Are you so heartless?"

Tibbeck drew up his shoulders and growled. He implied that he knew best himself what he had to do in such a case. Once more disappointed Molitor left the building, and his heart sank within him as he returned home, having utterly failed in his efforts to get at the truth. At last he resolved to go to see Judge Feilen, who might at least relieve him of part of the responsibility, if he chose. But here also, the poor young man met with disappointment. The Judge refused to become an open ally; he shrugged his shoulders and answered:

"Certainly, a mere resemblance with an old miniature cannot convict our American. We must prove that he and the man for whom that reward was offered are one and the same person, and that will be hard, because the man was buried in 1864, and the authorities cannot well have been mistaken. But you might try; I myself am tired of the case, I confess, and fear we shall not gain much credit in the matter."

A few evenings later the young man called on Mrs. Wigan. He found her suffering. For a time she had shown real heroism in meeting the blows of fate, but now her strength was exhausted. There came days when she could not leave her bed. Erna, however, looked bravely at the future and felt confident yet that she could support her mother and

herself. With joy in her eyes, she told Molitor that she had at last succeeded in obtaining some orders for very fine and difficult embroidery. Poor Mrs. Wigan, lying on her sofa, covered with wraps and shawls, smiled sadly, and Molitor thought he saw how deeply she was concerned for the future of her child. How gladly he would have spoken and make known the passionate longing of his heart, which always grew stronger in Erna's presence! But he dared not. The time had not yet come! Who could tell what sudden changes the next day might bring, especially now, when it might become his duty to expose the two dear ladies to most painful publicity.

He was very sad when he took leave of the ladies on that evening. He had noticed an expression in the mother's sad face which had seriously alarmed him, so that he did not rest till she had promised to send for a doctor. But she had done this with great reluctance and with a very strange look in her face. Erna accompanied the guest to the outer door, her bright, cheerful manner forming a striking contrast with the melancholy sadness of her mother. But she thought only of cheering the young man, and her sweet Good-night! as she was closing the house-door, lingered long on his ear, like hope-inspiring music.

CHAPTER XII.

Weeks had gone by and no change had yet taken place in the system adopted by the police to discover the murderer. John Grover still denied, and if he looked a trifle more oppressed, this was as likely the effect of long confinement as a reason for new suspicions. The joiner had paid the penalty of his misdeed and was free once more. The Commissary, who did not venture to call upon the two ladies, the older of whom was considered dangerously ill, still could not resist the temptation to come to the house on the plea that he must see how Tibbeck behaved after leaving the prison. He found mother and daughter as comfortable as the house and Mrs. Tibbeck's kindness could make them; the husband he did not see. He had at once found work in a large establishment, and left the house at six in the morning, returning only late at night. His master, however, while praising his work, complained of his irregular habits; not unfrequently, he left in the afternoon and returned only after an absence of several hours.

Alas! no light came from any direction, and Molitor lost heart. He was nearly despairing when one of those insignificant accidents, which sometimes become suddenly all-important, rekindled his hopes. He was about to leave his office, when one of the keepers stopped him, saying:

"I should like to mention to you that No. 29 seems to have friends outside who can reach him. I am not quite sure, but yesterday, as I was looking into his cell, through the opening in the door, I saw the prisoner pick up something that must have been thrown in through the window. You know the window of No. 29 looks upon the little alley, where nobody ever passes."

"No. 29? Is that not the cell where the cashier, Slummer, is confined?"

"Yes," replied the man, and then continued: "I ought to have gone in at once, but I was stupid enough to wait and see what it was the prisoner held in his hand. When I saw it was a bit of paper I dashed in, but I was not quick enough. No. 29 instantly swallowed the paper."

"When did that happen?"

"Yesterday afternoon, before dark."

"And since then you have, of course, watched the prisoner very carefully."

"Yes, sir, but in vain. The prisoner read a long time in the Bible; then he wrote a little, and of a sudden he threw something out of the window."

"That is very suspicious," said Molitor. "Why did you not at once report to me?"

"It only happened this morning, sir," said the keeper.

"No doubt," said the Commissary, after some reflection, "this man Slummer has some way of communing with the outer world. He is a dangerous scamp and you must watch him closely. Did you look into the alley?"

"Of course I went down as soon as I was free, but not a bit of paper, not a trace was there to be found. And yet nobody ever passes there, not even the children of the neighborhood. The street is perfectly deserted."

"Well, watch the prisoner well. I will see to it that the alley also is watched."

By chance he met, as he crossed the court that separates the jail from the Court House, one of his men, in whom he placed great confidence.

"I am glad to meet you Schmidt," he said to him. "They tell me one of the prisoners gets letters from outside, in the narrow alley behind the North wing. I want you to watch there, keeping an eye on the third window from the right in the second story. That is Slummer, the cashier's cell."

"Ah! I see!" replied the officer.

"I am very anxious to get hold of one of these letters. I shall remain at my office, not leaving it even to go to dinner, and hope you will report to me at once if you discover anything."

Molitor found upon reaching his office such a mass of work waiting for him, that he plunged in and kept at it till the early twilight of the May day

warned him to take care of his eyes. Just then there came a knock at the door, and to his surprise the detective entered, bringing a man whom he had arrested. At a glance Molitor saw that this was his old friend Tibbeck, who looked timidly at him.

"Well, what is it? Whom have you there?" asked the Commissary, as he rose from his chair.

"I went to watch the alley," began Schmidt, "as you had ordered me, and went for that purpose into a room of the beer-shop opposite. Sitting at the window I could see the jail and the street alike. This man here kept me waiting a long time. At last he came down the alley, looking anxiously all around and then cautiously approaching the prison. Quick as lightning I was after him, but kept close to the wall, so that he could not see me. He now sauntered down the alley like a harmless wanderer; of a sudden I heard someone whistle two short notes and then a long one; this was Tibbeck, I was sure. Then the whistling was repeated, but it sounded lower and much more subdued; this came from the jail. Now Tibbeck stopped under the window you pointed out to me, and as he looked around to make sure of being unobserved, I had him suddenly by the wrist; he tried to resist, but I soon had possessed myself of this object, which he was evidently going to throw in through the open window."

With these words the man handed Molitor a slip of paper, which had been folded around a pebble to make it heavy, and then was securely fastened with twine.

"That is a nice story, Tibbeck," said the Commissary to the prisoner, whose eyes were helplessly wandering around the room. "Is this the way you reward me for my confidence? Instead of helping me and the poor ladies at your house, you become an accomplice of that thief! Are you not ashamed, Tibbeck? I thought you were an honest man, and now you prove to be a good-for-nothing rascal!"

Tibbeck shook with rage; his pale face flushed up and his eyes rested for a moment with intense bitterness on the face of the Commissary.

"Yes, a miserable, common rascal—nothing better!" he exclaimed, and with a face as red as a poppy he came up to the table. "What do you want me to do with you now?" continued the Commissary. "I ought to send you back to jail."

"For God's sake," stammered Tibbeck, looking vaguely around in the room, "anything but that! Just for my wife's sake and my daughter's sake. Lina is going to be married, and if I am sent to prison again, her betrothed will back out, I am sure—"

"And you want me to take pity on you, miserable creature," Molitor cut him short. "Do you take pity on Mrs. Wigan and her daughter? You become an accomplice of that inveterate blackguard—I think I can do nothing better than to send you back again at once."

Here he turned around as if he meant to sign at once an order for arrest. The joiner began to groan piteously.

"But, Mr. Commissary," he said at last, "I have not committed any crime! I am perfectly willing to tell you all that I have really done. I only took a few lines that Slummer had written, to Mr. Dunsing. I had hid them between stocking and shoe, so that nobody found them when they searched me. That was all."

Molitor's face looked feverish again and he felt that a strange excitement overcame him once more, such as he had repeatedly felt when he thought himself on the brink of some great discovery. But he concealed it carefully, and looking sharply at the man before him, he repeated:

"Ah, Mr. Dunsing was to get the letter?"

"Yes, Mr. Dunsing, who has the factory at Seaton."

"Well, and what was written on the paper?"

"H–m, I could not read it, it was Spanish or some other Latin language," answered the mechanic, greatly embarrassed.

"Well, you gave the paper to Mr. Dunsing, and what did he say?"

"He did not say anything; he laughed and told me I was a fool," replied Tibbeck.

"Well, and then?"

"That was all."

"Man, why will you lie!" shouted Molitor in a rage; "shall I send you to prison?"

"Oh, please don't do that, Mr. Commissary!" begged the mechanic, twisting his cap excitedly till it resembled a rope; "he told me to come again the

MOLITOR INTRODUCING JOHANNES TO THE WIDOW.—*See Chapter XVII.*

next day, and then he gave me another paper and asked me to throw it into the window from which the first had come."

"And you did that? And what was on the paper?"

"Well, I know it was wrong, but there was not a single word on the paper—"

"Man, are you lying again? I shall have to send you back after all."

"No, Mr. Molitor, don't do that, I beseech you. I assure you there was nothing but mere numbers. I could not make out anything."

"And the cashier sent the answers in the same way?" asked the Inquisitor.

"Exactly!" replied the workman.

"But how did he know that you were there, ready to receive his message?"

"Because he told me when I was in the same cell with him that I must come every day at the same hour, and give a signal by whistling."

And the man repeated the signal as the Commissary had heard it.

"Well," continued the latter, "he threw the paper out of the window, and you picked it up and ran away?"

"Just so, Mr. Molitor."

"And then you carried the paper to Mr. Dunsing, and he paid you handsomely, no doubt?"

"Very far from that, sir! He was much more inclined to throw me out of the window when I came the second time to him. He went with the

paper into the next room, and when he came back he looked deadly pale in his face, and told me to come the day after and get an answer."

"When was that?"

"That was to-day, sir, and the constable took the paper."

"Ah, indeed!" said the Commissary; "and you really do not know what these ciphers mean?" He had in the meantime taken off the threads that held the stone in the paper, and was now smoothing it carefully.

"After all, this can wait," he said with a glance at the scrawl, of which as yet he could make nothing. "What am I to do with you?" he asked the man, who was still shaking and trembling with fear.

"Don't make me unhappy for life," he begged piteously. "I told you the whole truth. I had no idea I was doing anything so very wrong, and as he moreover promised me a thousand marks—"

"What! He promised to give you a thousand marks?"

"Yes, indeed! And, by God, that is a big sum for one of us. And then, I thought, I might now be able to settle that other business."

"What other business do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing! nothing!" replied the man, stepping now on one foot and now on the other, and twisting his cap into a rope.

"What did you mean? You must have meant something!"

"I was only thinking of the furniture for our rooms, and what a Godsend this money would be to my wife!"

"I have a great mind to confront you and your thousand-mark friend," said the Commissary, thoughtfully, and went to the bell-rope.

"You can do that," replied Tibbeck, eagerly. "I told you the truth and nothing but the truth!"

Molitor dropped the hand he had raised to ring the bell and said:

"Well, perhaps I had better first learn something about that piece of paper."

Then suddenly stepping up close to the mechanic, he seized him by the shoulders and shook him violently.

"Let me tell you, my man, you are a thorough scamp. If it were not for your wife and your daughter— Will you promise me not to have anything to do with your two noble friends—Yes or No?"

"Certainly, sir, certainly! Only do not send me back to jail."

The Commissary turned to the detective. "Schmidt," he said, "you will keep your eye on this man, and I'll order two other detectives to do the same."

"Now, have a care, my good friend," he said to the workman. "If you do the slightest thing, you wander to jail! You will not show yourself at Seaton, nor in the alley below—do you hear?"

"Great Heavens!" cried the man; "I thought I

could earn those thousand marks easily enough, and now—but really, sir, I never thought there was any harm in what he asked me to do."

"Clear out!" said Molitor, and Tibbeck nearly jumped for joy as he heard the welcome words.

The Commissary dismissed the detective also, and when he was alone he said to himself:

"This is an important discovery!" and drew the little note from under the paper-weight. Alas! this was all he saw written on it:

"V. B, 25, 9–17; III. 5, B, B–16; VI. 14. 5, 3–4; IV. 21. 25, 16; V. 1, 1–2."

Molitor was, of course, no novice at reading ciphers. Many a time he had worked hard at new systems, but so far never in vain. This time, however, his experience forsook him, and for a long time he stared at the Roman and Arabic signs, utterly discomfited. All his former efforts failed on this occasion and for hours he sat, bent over the mysterious paper, trying in vain to discover the key. At last his head began to ache, and he felt stupefied by the continued fruitless exertion. He tried to refresh his mind by a few hours' absolute rest, and then to begin once more with renewed vigor. But in this also he was unsuccessful; sleep fled from him, and a thousand sneering and laughing gnomes began to dance around him, their long, bony fingers pointing at him and holding up countless problems in arithmetic before his weary eyesight. Sud-

denly, as if by inspiration, it came to his mind that the keeper had told him how busily the prisoner had studied his Bible before writing the mysterious note. Instantly he jumped up—the Bible must have been the book used by the cashier to write in safety! Without losing a moment, the young man arose and dressed with feverish haste. Then he took his Bible down and at once set to work. The New Testament alone was of importance, because no other part of the Bible is found in prison-cells. Almost at the first effort light broke. The Roman letters, he found, corresponded with those used in the Table of Contents, and in a moment he had the first little sentence before him: "I am not what you take me to be, but." Molitor's eyes were radiant with delight. Here was sense, and no doubt the words had a profound meaning for the initiated. The second part: "III. 5, B, B–16," was now easy enough; it meant: "But I will do it." The next ciphers were more difficult to unravel, till an accidental glance at the heading of the next chapter revealed the meaning. It was "Christ's Ascension" in the German version, and now Molitor was triumphant: "I am not what you take me to be; but I will do it the day after Ascension."

Almost painfully excited by this sudden discovery, Molitor jumped up and walked a few times up and down in the room. But almost instantly a new difficulty confronted him in his triumph. What was Dunsing going to do on Ascension Day? Next Sunday was Ascension Day. Might not the mechanic

after all know more than he professed to know? He almost repented not having had him arrested at once, but upon reflection he concluded it was better so. What was most important was the clearly established conspiracy between Dunsing and the ex-cashier, and he could hardly wait for the time when he might call on the Judge and report to him his all-important discovery. In his heart he felt convinced that this was the turning point in the great *cause célèbre*, and that the American must sooner or later be set free, as soon as the real author of the crime should be discovered.

CHAPTER XIII.

The report which Molitor laid before Judge Feilen on that morning, excited him greatly. He read the deciphered message again and again and paid the young man the highest compliments on his perspicacity.

"But now," he concluded, "what is the nature of the conspiracy which can no longer be doubted?"

"I have so far only guessed, no facts as yet!" was the Commissary's cautious reply. "This only is certain: their common motive is a bad one. But what can the prisoner mean by guarding against any mistaken notion concerning himself, when he says: 'I am not the man you think I am.'

And then the second question: 'What is Dunsing going to do?' Is our bird going to say Good-bye to his cage?"

"How would it do to let the note reach its destination?"

"And then make the prisoner believe that Dunsing is willing to comply with his wishes?" asked the Judge, looking at the younger man with great interest.

"By no means, Judge. I think we would succeed better if we altered the note so as to convey an absolute refusal on the part of the manufacturer."

The Judge reflected a moment, then he said:

"And do you think you could change the secret message so carefully that it would not arouse any suspicion on the part of the prisoner?"

"Nothing is easier—provided I have guessed correctly, and I have also, luckily, a messenger at hand who will forward the note to the prisoner. The man Tibbeck, who is so happy having escaped a long imprisonment, that he will do anything to please us."

"The important point will be to see what effect such a disappointment will produce on the prisoner," said the Judge. "I willingly authorize you to do what you think best."

"I'll go at once to work. But do you not think, Judge, this man Dunsing ought to be watched? I suspect him!" And when the Judge looked at him inquiringly, he went on: "No doubt you remember the indorsed notes which we found in Banker

Wigan's private safe when the house was searched. Dunsing, at that time, declared he had received the two notes from his future father-in-law in payment of a debt. Now I have questioned the Receiver of the bank, who has searched every corner and examined every book, and he insists upon it that no such indebtedness—amounting to thirty thousand marks—is anywhere entered. The banker's private account alone is charged with the amount, in payment of the notes. Now, when the creditors held their meeting, and these notes were, as a matter of course, laid before them with the others, several members denied their genuineness. An expert was thereupon called in to decide on the banker's signature, and he remained in doubt. He stated that he could not positively declare it a forgery, but that, if it were such, it had been done with uncommon skill."

"What! Do you still maintain that Dunsing may have forged the indorsement?" asked the Judge, throwing himself back in his easy-chair and almost anxiously studying the young man's features.

"At all events, there is much to be said in favor of my suspicion," replied Molitor, with sparkling eyes. "I have information, obtained secretly, that the manufacturer has already, during Wigan's lifetime, suffered grievous losses, and now barely manages to keep his head above water. I can produce witnesses, who would affirm on oath, that they have lent him money only on the security of his impending marriage with the banker's daughter, who was

expected to bring him a magnificent dower. In such a perilous situation, Dunsing might very well have resorted to desperate means, and as he could not well venture to ask Wigan for new loans, he might readily have forged the two notes with the banker's name on the back, in order to save himself from threatening ruin. We know that the day for the wedding was originally fixed on a day only forty-eight hours before the notes were due; hence Dunsing was safe, for Wigan would, he reckoned, not brand his son-in-law as a forger. At the worst he might even have employed part of his wife's dower to pay the notes before they were presented for payment and thus reached the banker's eye. But then came the fatal blow; the death of a distant kinsman caused the postponement of the wedding for a whole month, and thus defeated Dunsing's plans. Without means, and hard pressed by his creditors, he could not recall the notes, and thus they reached the unsuspicious banker. The day of their falling due was near at hand, and with it the ruin that threatened Dunsing.

"Nor must I forget the peculiar smile with which the banker's confidential clerk presented the notes to us. Now this man is evidently a thorough scamp, capable of every wickedness. I submit, therefore—may it not be that these two bad men, Dunsing and the clerk, may have made common cause—the clerk for a large consideration—and may have conspired against the banker? It is true, Dunsing denies having had any visitor on the fatal night—I

am, however, able to prove that such a visitor came to his house at that very time. What is more probable now, but that this nightly visitor was the confidential clerk, who had hurried to the factory to report that the notes had been paid by the banker. This may have frightened Dunsing and, in his terror, he may have despaired, seeing certain ruin before him, and the loss of his betrothed as a matter of course. What more natural than that he should have then formed the desperate resolve to silence the banker before he should take any measures for his destruction? He expected the banker; but by an accident he found out that Wigan was already at Seaton and in his own villa. His accomplice, Slummer, lay in wait for the poor man, and no sooner had John Grover and Wigan parted, than the latter received the blow that ended his life.

"That would also explain the disappearance of the banker's pocket-book, for who could be more deeply interested in its destruction than Dunsing?"

"You forget the gold watch and the chain, as well as the porte-monnaie, all of which seem to have been stolen?" interposed the Judge.

"It may be that they were taken only in order to give the murder the appearance of a robbery," replied Molitor, promptly. "I am quite ready to admit that there are many points of evidence which speak against such a crime on the part of Dunsing; but the presumption that he is the guilty man is at least as strongly supported as that Grover is the culprit. If I am right, the presence of so many matches,

that had been lit and scattered all around the dead man, is also explained. Either the guilty men searched their victim in the street and having found the pocket-book, in which they thought the papers might have been, and then repenting of their unwise hurry, they may have gone after the corpse, to strip it of watch and chain also—or the whole search may have taken place in the cellar."

The Judge looked at the ceiling of the room in deep meditation. At last he decided: "We must wait for the success of our forged letter before we take any new step."

"Then I beg leave to go to work at once," said the young man, and as the Judge consented, he hastened away.

It was little more than an hour later when the Commissary returned with a slip of paper, covered with ciphers like the former; he at once handed it to the Judge. It contained these signs:

"V. B, 25, 9–16; III. 5. B. B–15; III. 5, 32. 11; III. 5, B. 16; IV. 18, 21, 1–5; IV. 18, 20, 3–5; VIII. 1, 12, 30; IV. 18, 23, 7–B; IV. 18, 38, 24–28; IV. 18, 24, 15; V. 9, 4, 17–20; VII. 16, 5, 1–2; VII. 15, 58, 6–7; VII. 16, 8, 6."

With a smile he looked at the utterly unintelligible writing and then at another slip, which Molitor laid before him, and on which was written: "I am not the one you think I am. I will not do it. Why do you ask me? If I have acted badly, prove

it, that it is a great wrong. I find no blame in me. Why do you persecute me? I shall remain firm, immovable."

"Excellent! excellent!" cried Judge Feilen and looked delighted. "I hope this will have a decided effect on the prisoner! But we must act promptly, dear friend! Take at once the necessary measures!"

The effect of this mysterious message, which Tibbeck readily undertook to forward to the prisoner, surpassed their boldest expectations. They watched the prisoner through the small opening in the door of his cell. As the passages were still dark while the gas in the cell was burning, the room was as bright as day, and they could see all that was going on inside, while the prisoner did not suspect that he was watched. The two officials had waited till they heard a low subdued whistling from the street, then they drew nearer and distinctly heard the fall of a pebble in the cell, the crackling of stiff paper, the opening of the envelope and of a letter which they saw him read greedily.

It was a perfect comedy to see the prisoner's face, which was shone upon by the gas-flame, express the various sentiments which the forged letter called forth. He looked with every sentence that he deciphered more savage and bitter, till at last, when he had made out the last word, he looked furious, jumped up from his low seat, and tearing the note into a thousand small pieces, threw the fragments into his bucket. Then he ran up and down in his

cell, with perfect rage in all his features, and with a thousand fierce curses shook his fists in the face of his invisible enemy.

This might have lasted a quarter of an hour; then he suddenly stood still and, with fury in his eyes, drew the string that made the distant bell ring an alarm.

The Judge withdrew with his companion and ordered one of the keepers to look after the prisoner's demands. The man returned very soon and reported that Slummer asked to be carried before the Judge, as he had very important and new revelations to make.

When the man returned with this message, the Judge and Molitor exchanged looks of deep meaning. The clouds were evidently breaking and light was approaching. Then Feilen looked at his watch and told the man:

"In ten minutes bring Slummer to my office," and turning to the Commissary, he added: "Will you have the kindness to come with me? I should wish you to be present at the man's examination."

When ten minutes later the clerk was introduced into the Judge's office, the two gentlemen started at the expression of subdued rage which his face bore.

"You have asked to see me—what is the information which you desire to impart?" the Judge asked, in a very formal manner, so as to conceal the excitement which he felt at this critical moment. He pretended to look for something in the piles of papers and documents that encumbered the table.

Molitor also assumed an indifferent air, although he did not for a moment take his eyes from the prisoner and almost anxiously watched his demeanor.

"I feel impelled to impart to you certain secrets, which I doubt not will prove to be of great importance to you. They concern the assassination of Banker Wigan, my former employer."

His words were apparently of no interest for the Judge, who received them with an incredulous smile.

"Ah!" he said, "the old story! My good man, you have so often imparted to me, as you call it, these unintelligible secrets, and they have so invariably proved to be nothing but air-bubbles, that I really do not care to hear any more, if that is all you have to say. I am very busy just now, and your information can wait, I dare say."

"No, no! You shall know all," shouted the wretch, trembling with intense excitement and stamping with his foot. "That man shall not escape his punishment, and I will teach him that I am not to be insulted with impunity!" He paused here, and then approaching the judge's writing-table, he said, in a firm and impressive voice: "I charge the manufacturer, Richard Dunsing of Seaton, with the murder of Banker Wigan!"

The two officials, although prepared to hear revelations of grave import, were in no small consternation when they heard this definite accusation.

"What do you say?" asked the Judge, recovering quickly and glancing at his clerk to warn him

that he must most carefully take down every word of the ex-cashier. "You accuse the manufacturer, Richard Dunsing, of having murdered your former employer? How can that be? You know very well that another person has been arrested on account of this very crime and is now in the hands of Justice."

Slummer laughed insolently.

"Then you, gentlemen, priests of the Goddess Justitia, have committed a nice blunder!" he shouted, defiantly. "I do not believe the American to be guilty!"

"All the more was it your duty to come to his assistance with your knowledge of the truth, and not to let an innocent man be threatened with death, perhaps!" said the Judge, sternly reproving the prisoner.

"Ah! that troubles me little! Let the American stay in jail till he turns black—what is that to me? Everybody for himself! But I have my reasons now, very strong and well-weighed reasons, for tearing the mask from Mr. Dunsing's sweet face!"

"Your charge is probably nothing but an act of revenge, which may go on record and there can remain for all time to come!" replied the Judge, with apparent indifference. "At least, if you insist, you will have to bring very strong and definite evidence."

"And that is what I am able to do and mean to do! Of course, I cannot produce witnesses who were actually present and saw how Dunsing crushed

the skull of my former employer. But if that were always necessary, no murder would ever be proved and avenged by Justice," answered Slummer, with low cunning in his eye and a triumphant, diabolical smile on his thin lips. "At all events, I can prove that Dunsing was most deeply interested in getting rid of the banker."

"Then tell us what you know, but mind you stick closely to the truth," replied the Judge, looking at the Commissary.

"Well, then, it was on the same day on which the marriage of Dunsing with my former employer's daughter was to have taken place—on January 28th—when I happened to meet Dunsing at a restaurant. Generally he had taken little notice of me, often even treated me very haughtily, looking down almost contemptuously upon the clerks of his future father-in-law. On that day, however, he apparently sought me out among my friends and courteously invited me to empty a bottle of his favorite wine with him. After having made a number of polite speeches and paid me several compliments, the fool fancied he had won my confidence and—made his confession.

"He began by telling me—what I had long since known—that he was financially embarrassed, that this was, however, merely momentary and would, of course, be at an end as soon as he received the very considerable dower of his wife. Nevertheless, the embarrassment, he said, was too serious to keep it altogether from the banker, to whom he had

ascribed it to specially heavy orders, that had all come at once. Upon the banker's offering to assist him he had made two notes, which Wigan had kindly indorsed at once, stipulating, however, in his own interest, that the notes should not pass out of his own hands, but remain there as security. Now, however, circumstances were such that he must let the notes fall into strange hands.

"If the wedding had taken place on the appointed day, all would have been right, but now that it had been so long postponed, he looked with fear and trembling to the 9th of February, as his father-in-law might misinterpret his putting the notes into circulation, and this might lead even to a rupture. I was to do him the great favor to conceal the disappearance from the banker, and he promised to pay me, as my reward, the amount of the notes, thirty thousand marks.

"At first, I confess, I was strongly tempted to do what he asked—what was the harm? At the worst I could, myself, liquidate the means to recover the notes—"

"Of course," said the Judge, scornfully, "as you controlled all the deposits in the bank."

Slummer cast a poisonous look at him, but went on quietly with his account.

"But when I thought the matter over, I began to doubt. As confidential clerk, I could at all times examine the books, even the private and secret books of the firm. Now, I knew Mr. Wigan was a very cautious, far-seeing business-man, who con-

scientiously entered every small amount, even when he spent it for his own use."

"Do you mean to say that Mr. Wigan could not have spent or lost or lent a sum of money without entering it at least in his private account-book?" asked the Judge, with apparent indifference.

"Just so," replied Slummer, not thinking of the effect of such a confession.

"How, then, can you dare assent," continued the Judge, now in a very impressive tone, "that your deceased employer lost many hundred thousands in speculations on 'Change? A man of such precise business habits could certainly not have failed to keep notes of his gains and losses in his private account-book, and yet his papers have been searched in vain for a single entry of the kind."

These words made a deep impression upon the ex-cashier. He evidently felt that his thirst of revenge had misled him, that he had mentioned a fact which would turn against him in the hands of a clever lawyer. His face turned deadly pale, his habitual presence of mind seemed to have left him completely, and his eyes wandered helplessly from one face to another.

"Pshaw!" he broke forth at last, "that is neither here nor there! I am lost, I know. I feel the rope almost around my neck. I cannot escape now, I see it clearly—but at least my sweet Mr. Dunsing shall keep me company. Will you listen to me, or will you not?"

The Judge frowned and seemed to be disposed to

reprove the prisoner on account of his improper conduct, but an almost imploring glance from the Commissary kept him silent.

"I may assume, then," interposed Molitor, "that you found no kind of private notes in the books of your former employer that might have thrown some light on the two notes?"

Slummer shook his head once more energetically.

"No!" he replied firmly, "and this convinced me at once that my principal could not possibly have issued two such large notes. He would most assuredly have entered the amount, not in one place only, but in two or three—he who never omitted setting down a mark given as a fee to some workman or to a messenger. It is simply impossible that he should have failed to set down a sum of thirty thousand marks, payable eventually on the ninth of February.

"Besides, why should he have made a mystery of the acceptance of two such notes with me, from whom he had no secret whatsoever in matters of business? Why should he, contrary to every habit of his commercial life, have insisted upon it that these two notes should not be allowed to go out of his hands? With this condition upon them, they had no value whatever. If he did not trust his future son-in-law sufficiently to hand him money or good bills of exchange, he might have simply indorsed Mr Dunsing's notes, and his name would have sufficed to cover ten times the amount of these mysterious notes."

"Then you suspect that they are forgeries?"

"I do not suspect it—I know it!" replied the ex-cashier positively. "Let me tell you what a comedy was played in my employer's private office on the afternoon of February the ninth. I had waited the whole forenoon to see the notes presented—that they would not simply be paid by the cashier, I knew, because as a matter of course, no provision had been made for such payment. At last, towards five o'clock, the assistant-cashier appeared in my office with the two notes in his hands and asked me what was to be done with them. I took the papers at once and carried them into Mr. Wigan's private office. He seemed to be greatly excited and at first refused to talk business with me, but when I insisted and showed him the papers, he looked dumbfounded. 'I am supposed to have signed that,' he exclaimed at first sight, 'and Dunsing has given these notes.' Once more he looked at me amazed, and then asked very sternly, if I permitted myself, perhaps, to enjoy a bad joke.

"'Then your signature is a forgery, Mr. Wigan?' I begged leave to inquire.

"He looked at me fixedly, and once more gazing at his name as it was written across the notes, he murmured to himself: 'That'll break his neck! The infamous rascal!' Then he rose, deadly pale, and with every nerve twitching in terrible excitement.

"I knew him so well—I was quite sure that it needed only a word to make him raging mad. This was my reason for keeping perfectly quiet, and in apparent humility to await his orders. For several

minutes he continued the fearful inner combat; then he said hoarsely in an entirely changed voice: 'The notes must be paid. Direct the assistant-cashier to pay the amount and to charge my private account with the same.' But when I wanted to take back the two notes, grievously disappointed by the failure of my effort, he threw himself like an infuriated tiger upon the writing-table, placing both hands upon the strips of paper. 'No! The papers remain here in my keeping!' he almost shouted, speaking like a master. 'Now, go! I want to be alone!'"

"That is certainly very suspicious," said the Judge, listening intently and looking at the ex-cashier, as if he meant to read his very soul. "And you are ready to swear to it?" he added, after a pause.

"I can swear to it any moment!" cried the man impudently, "for whatever mistake I have made in any other direction, I could never commit perjury."

"And what makes you think now," continued the Judge, "that the great manufacturer, Dunsing, is in any way connected with the calamity that has befallen the banker? He may very well have forged notes—but there is a long way from forgery to—murder! Besides, how could he possibly have known that the rich banker would visit Seaton on that evening?"

The prisoner smiled again insolently.

"When I returned to my employer to report to him that the matter had been settled, I found him ready to leave the bank. He ordered me to take charge of the business, as important duties called

him to Seaton, where he must see Dunsing. He was in the act of giving me additional instructions when the letter-carrier entered and interrupted him, handing him a "Speedy Delivery" letter. He eagerly opened it and turned once more pale unto death; then he threw the envelope into the waste-paper basket and walked several times up and down in the room.

"'I shall have to change my plan after all,' he said and, looking at his watch, he added: 'I see it is nearly six already. I shall go to Seaton as I intended, but I shall not be able to meet Mr. Dunsing. I shall have to beg you to represent me in this matter, to hunt up Mr. Dunsing, and to hand him this paper.' With these words he sat down at his writing-table and in feverish haste jotted down a few words.

"I ventured to look over his shoulder and saw to my amazement that what he wrote was a short notice of the breaking off of his daughter's engagement to Mr. Dunsing. Then he seemed to yield to a sudden inspiration. He crumpled up the paper on which he had written the notice, threw it angrily on the carpet and even kicked it with his foot far under the table. 'You may as well tell the gentleman what I wished to have him know,' he said passionately, and then, his voice swelling with indignation, he added: 'Tell him that if he has not arranged the matter in question by to-morrow noon, I shall put it into the hands of the Prosecuting Attorney.'

"He was so terribly excited that I thought he

hardly knew what he was saying. I only bowed in silence and went at once to Seaton, to see Mr. Dunsing at his factory."

"Then you were the visitor who was seen by several people and whose presence Dunsing nevertheless denied?" asked the Judge, taken by surprise, and the Commissary also drew near, deeply interested in the prisoner's revelation.

The latter only nodded.

"I was delighted to see the rich young man's desperate embarrassment, when he heard the message; he insisted upon seeing the banker that very evening and throwing himself at his feet, craving forgiveness. When I told him that the banker was here present, in Seaton, he was surprised, and then I thought for the first time I read in his eyes the resolution to do something rash and unnatural. Of course, I had no idea of what this was. But later, when the misfortune came, I well remember this impression. In fine, my supposition is, at least, very plausible. Dunsing, who knew that the banker had no other friends in the little colony of villas, and would, therefore, not likely stay at any other house but his own, no doubt went to his future father-in-law's villa, as soon as I had left him. He may have arrived there at the very moment when the American, whom you hold in prison, was coming away from Wigan. What happened next, I dare say Mr. Dunsing can tell you. I do not believe in any accident that should have happened to the banker and, according to my view of the matter, no one on earth

had as much reason to wish for a calamity as Dunsing."

A triumphant smile hovered around his thin narrow lips, as he said this. He evidently felt proud of his keen perception and tried to read the admiration that was due to him in the face of his visitors.

But the Judge had become very thoughtful. "I must make you aware," he said, after a pause, "that you will have to repeat these statements under oath. Are you prepared to do that?"

"This moment!" replied the ex-cashier, looking as if he were ready to face death to secure the victory to Truth. "I have not said a word that is not absolutely true."

"Well, then we will take your deposition at once," said the Judge, and when this had been done, and the whole statement had been read aloud once more for the prisoner's benefit, the oath was administered and the prisoner sent back to his cell.

The two men had evidently been deeply impressed by the recent events; the Judge took his seat at the table, drew a red-bound volume from a drawer and began to fill up a blank order, glancing but once at his companion.

The Commissary, also, looked solemn and showed in his features the expectation of a great and important step that would, no doubt, be presently taken. He was right, for after a short hesitation, the Judge handed him an order, and looking at the youger man with great kindliness and almost affection, he said, formally and solemnly :

"Mr. Commissary Molitor, I herewith order you to arrest Richard Dunsing, in Seaton, and to send him at once to the City Prison!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Early on the next morning the passage, upon which the Judge's office was situated, was full of life and excitement, for at a late hour on the preceding day the Judge had no sooner heard of Mr. Dunsing's arrest, than he issued a number of summonses for people that were to appear before him.

The more intelligent factory hands had been selected by the overseers at the Judge's special order, and had already been examined. Mr. Dunsing seemed to have been rather unpopular with the hands, for only the janitor of the great factory remained faithful to him. The others were all more or less disposed to complain and, although this was altogether foreign to the investigation now going on, they declared that for some time he had paid them very irregularly, and was in debt with many of them to a considerable amount.

What was far more important, however, was that the janitor, as well as the two night-watchmen, declared having seen a visitor on that evening who came to call on Mr. Dunsing. The janitor had soon after gone home, but one of the watchmen added, that he

had seen his master go away after his visitor had left him in a state of great, visible excitement, and that when he had returned two hours later, Mr. Dunsing had been so disturbed in mind that he did not notice the watchman at all, but without returning his respectful salutation, had gone straight to his room.

The old housekeeper, who managed the bachelor household, was next examined. She had, however, little to say, and seemed to be exceedingly anxious not to say anything that might be injurious to her master's reputation—still, she also had to admit, after an almost painful cross-examination, that Mr. Dunsing had left the house in the night from the 9th to the 10th February. Unfortunately she had been suffering from an acute toothache, which kept her awake. But, of course, she could not swear to the identity of the man whose going and coming she had only heard.

Finally, the owner of the factory himself was ushered in. As soon as he entered, he broke forth into a storm of complaints and reproached the authorities with an abuse of their power. He looked pale, unsettled, and no longer possessed of that easy well-poised self-esteem which characterized him in the world. Even his figure showed a certain coming down from its habitual upright and self-asserting carriage. His eyes seemed to have sunk back into their dark orbits and looked around now resting only for an instant on the features of his enemies, the Judge and his companions, and then

wandering aimlessly along the walls, as if in search of some place where they might find rest and peace.

"I protest against it! You have no right to arrest me! I make you responsible for all the grievous injury this high-handed and unwarrantable proceeding will do me and my business!"

"For the present I have to make you responsible, sir!" replied the Judge, calmly but very decisively. "You appear here before me, your Judge, accused of a great crime, and it is for you to clear yourself of the charge—if you can."

"What do you mean? I am not conscious of any crime!" the prisoner cried out excitedly, and yet he could not prevent his eyes from casting a furtive look at the voluminous papers that were piled up before the Judge.

"Perhaps you would do better to answer some questions of mine," resumed the Judge, not in the least affected by the violence of the man before him. "Did you see a visitor on the evening of February 9th, and who was the gentleman?"

"How can I know that after so long a time? Friends come and go at my house, as it happens!" replied the young man impertinently.

"And yet that evening has produced a radical and permanent change in your fate. You might readily recall even the smallest details of all that happened then."

"Ah, yes! Now I remember!" said Dunsing, shading his eyes with his right hand. "You mean the night in which the banker, Wigan, perished?"

"Exactly! It was the night when the unfortunate banker Wigan, was murdered," replied the Judge, nodding his head. "Well—who was your visitor? It was about eight o'clock."

Dunsing's eyes wandered once more from face to face, from one wall of the room to another; he hesitated, evidently to gain time and to prepare his answer. But when the Judge somewhat impatiently repeated the question, he cried out violently:

"I do not know of any visitor—I was unwell that night; I was alone in my house all the evening."

"I must tell you that you do not tell the truth. Three witnesses of the highest standing have confessed that you did receive a gentleman and kept him for some time; it may even be that it was the banker, Wigan, himself, who called on you."

"That is a lie!" cried the prisoner, while his pale face flushed slightly, though but for a moment. He approached the Judge and raised his head a little.

"That is a lie!" he repeated, and added, "Mr. Wigan was not at my house that evening."

"Well, that can be easily settled; what was the name of your visitor then?"

"I do not see any reason for telling you."

"Yes, you have—for much depends on it that concerns your welfare," the Judge interrupted him, speaking in a very stern and impressive tone. And as the young man kept silent and looked defiant, he added: "Well, I will show you that I am kindly disposed towards you. I know who your visitor was!"

"Then, I wonder all the more, why you should ask me who it was!" said Dunsing contemptuously.

"It was the cashier, Slummer," said the Judge.

"That is a lie!" cried the prisoner furiously. "I never had anything to do with that blackguard."

"And yet you sat with him a few days before in a restaurant for several hours," said the Judge, in a dry, business-like tone, turning over some of the papers before him, as if he cared little for the reply that might come. "You were trying to persuade him to accept two promissory notes amounting to thirty thousand marks, which have since been found among Mr. Wigan's papers, indorsed by himself. And in return for this service you promised him a like amount, payable on the day after your marriage with the great banker's daughter."

"That is a lie; a wretched calumny!" cried Dunsing, who had turned once more deadly pale and whose eyes were again wandering aimlessly from face to face.

"It is the truth!" answered the Judge, looking very sternly at the young man. "The former cashier of the house, Mr. Slummer, has but a few hours ago testified upon oath that this was a fact."

The unfortunate man suddenly showed a most fearful change of expression in his features.

"What!" he cried in perfect fury; "that rascal, that wretch, has dared betray me?"

A few moments sufficed to restore him to himself. With a short, bitter laugh, that even struck the experienced Judge as almost diabolical, he added:

"And upon the evidence of such a creature you cause me to be arrested, an honorable man of blameless reputation! I deny the accusation. The notes are no forgeries. Mr. Wigan himself handed them to me. I have told you nothing but the truth and the whole truth."

"Who has said anything of forgery?" asked the Judge, fixing his eyes upon the prisoner's face.

"Well, it must have been meant so, or the ex-cashier would certainly not have reported such a fact and let me be arrested and thrown into jail like a common robber or murderer!" he cried out furiously. "But you will look at it in another light, I tell you, when you find out how this rascal of an ex-cashier appealed to me, through a former jail-bird, to help him to escape."

"But," replied the Judge, calmly, "that is the very thing that makes us suspect you. How could that man wish you to help him, if you had never had anything to do with him, as you stated just now?"

The prisoner cast down his eyes. He felt he was caught in his own trap.

But the Judge did not leave him time to invent a new falsehood, and said at once:

"You need not try to lead us astray. We are thoroughly well-informed. We have even received the official notification from the receivers of the bank, that the apparent indorsement of Mr. Wigan is a forgery."

"That is a lie! I repeat, it is a lie!" exclaimed

the man, flaring up once more. "It is, of course, easy enough to cast suspicion upon a man of honor, but I should like to see how you could prove that the name should not be Mr. Wigan's writing, who was to be my father-in-law in so short a time."

"And yet the proof is at hand," interrupted the Judge, shaking his head. "You had really better not try our patience any longer." He looked for a moment at the papers before him, and then asked: "Since when have you known Mr. John Grover, and what do you know of him and his antecedents?"

Dunsing looked at him in amazement.

"I hear that name now almost for the first time," he replied, in a tone of honest conviction. "If I am not mistaken, this is the man now in prison, because suspected of having murdered the banker, Mr. Wigan."

"You have had nothing to do with this gentleman?"

"But, I pray you, what curious questions do you ask me, when I tell you, I do not know that man!"

"Then, of course, you have not plotted with him against a third person?"

"No!" came the curt and almost contemptuous answer.

The Judge looked ill at ease and once more began to consult the piles of paper on his table. Then he explained a second time all his reasons for suspecting the prisoner of having forged the banker's name.

The accused listened disdainfnlly and when he had ended, he broke out into a loud, derisive laugh.

"I once more deny, most emphatically, having made any attempt at forgery," he exclaimed. "But even if I should have forged them, who gave you the right to arrest me in this informal way? As far as I know, the Code admits of such a proceeding only when the accused threatens to defeat Justice by flight, or when a real crime has been committed?"

"And who tells us that this is not the case?"

"Pshaw! I am not easily frightened. I am quite certain that to forge documents can only be punished with imprisonment up to two years."

"You seem to have informed yourself well on the subject," said the Judge, smiling ironically; "but the indorsement, which is proven to be your work, is only one of the means leading to another result. You have not been arrested on the charge of forgery—you are accused of having murdered Mr. Wigan, the banker! What have you now to say?"

The man looked petrified; with wide open, glassy eyes he stared at the official; then he spasmodically covered his heart with his hand. Involuntarily he next drew nearer to the table, and said:

. "What! They accuse me of murder! of having killed Mr. Wigan, the banker!" His voice was trembling with excitement. "Pshaw! That is nonsense! The greatest nonsense on earth! I verily believe, sir, you are trifling with me."

"I wish you would drop the delusion under which you seem to labor, that your lofty manner and

phrases produce any effect upon me," said the Judge, reprovingly. "You must see, now, that it is of the greatest importance for you to establish in the minutest detail your whereabouts and your doings on that night between the ninth and the tenth of February of this year. You must have common-sense enough to see that our suspicions are, to say the least, very natural. After the cashier had told you how matters stood with the two notes, you must have been afraid of being mercilessly exposed by Mr. Wigan, or even of being handed over to a Criminal Court; for you could not possibly raise the amount required to provide for the two notes. On the other hand, you were ruined for life, if the banker took the step of which he had spoken to the cashier not only, but also to his wife. And you could not for a moment doubt that he would do it! What more natural, therefore, than to suspect that you, who alone knew of Mr. Wigan's presence in Seaton, should have lain in wait at his villa, and when he refused to save you from your fate, should have killed the obstinate man?"

"You make me out a monster!" exclaimed the man, trembling in all his limbs. "How can you dare presume—oh! this is too much! I dare not think of it! it makes me mad!"

Wringing his hands in despair, he stood in the center of the room. Then, with a groan, he sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

The Judge looked at him with calm, searching eyes.

"Your conduct is not in your favor," he said after a pause. "Will you now tell me if you received a visitor on that evening, and if this was the ex-cashier, Slummer?"

In utter confusion Dunsing dropped his hands and looked at the Judge with dull, lifeless eyes.

"Yes, I must admit it," he answered reluctantly. "It was that arch-scoundrel who came to see me!"

The Judge seemed not to have heard the reply.

"And do you confess, also, that he informed you of Mr. Wigan's intention to spend the evening at Seaton?"

"That, also, is true—but—however—"

"Never mind," the Judge cut the prisoner short. "How long may Slummer have staid with you?"

"It may have been ten o'clock when he left me."

"And what did you do then?"

The accused started suddenly; a bright flush rose on his face, to be instantly followed by deadly pallor. "I—I—" he stammered; his eyes fell and he groaned deeply.

"What did you do then, Mr. Dunsing?" repeated the Judge, accenting his words sharply.

The accused passed his hand through his dishevelled hair.

"I—I—" he stammered again. "What can I have done?" he then added, with somewhat firmer voice. "I told you I felt unwell. I went to bed."

"No! You did not!" the Judge said, decidedly. "Twenty minutes after your visitor had left you you, also, went out of the precinct of your factory."

"That is a lie!" cried Dunsing again, but his voice sounded hoarse and veiled. He intended to rise from his chair, but he sank back again, unable to do so.

"No, sir, it is the truth!" replied the Judge again, measuring him with piercing eyes. "You left the inclosure and went down Louis Street till you came to Neander Street, and then went past Mr. Wigan's property, as far as the next villa. Then you turned and walked several times restlessly up and down in Neander Street. Once, you even crossed the street and came back again. This was close by the new building, and happened, probably, when you followed the track of the man who was afterwards murdered, and when you began that ominous conversation that was to terminate in such a dreadful deed."

"No! there you are mistaken. I only wanted to light my cigar; the wind was high, the rain fell in big drops and I had to seek shelter behind the fence."

"Then you confess having been in Neander Street at that hour?"

Half-suppressed groans once more rose from Dunsing's lips, which had gradually turned as white as chalk, as he felt how he had been caught. In vain he tried to collect his thoughts; he was trembling all over.

"Well, I will admit, Judge, I left my house after the cashier had gone. I had important matters to settle with my father-in-law, and I hoped to catch him as he came out of his villa on his way home."

"You might have done that more easily, it seems to me. Why could you not simply go to his villa?"

"I imagined he must have appointed a meeting with some important personage—or he would not have come out at night to an unheated country house."

"Well, at all events, the subject of your conversation must have been a very exceptionally important affair. Perhaps you meant to ask Mr. Wigan to pardon you and to spare you; you perhaps wished to represent to him that to publish your disgrace would be equivalent to absolute ruin in business and in society. This, no doubt, was what made you so restless; you were in a state of great excitement. But how came it about that you were smoking? At such moments we are not apt to think of cigars—I am sure you were engaged in very different thoughts."

"I have admitted that I was excited—what more can I say? But the terrible cold began to invade my system; in spite of my active walking up and down, my limbs stiffened, I became sleepy, and to overcome this drowsiness, I lit a cigar. This was my only purpose for crossing the street and seeking a sheltered place near the new structure. Great God! How could I anticipate that so shortly afterwards such a fearful calamity would be enacted at that very place?"

"Then you spoke with Mr. Wigan?" asked the judge.

"No! No!" cried the young factory-owner. "Hour after hour passed away, and he never came

out of his house, although I could distinctly see through the blinds that there was still light in the house. At last I could no longer struggle with the drowsiness that was gradually overcoming me. I turned back, having accomplished nothing. Great God! If I had dreamed of what was to happen so soon after, and that I should be accused of such a horrible crime, I would have waited there till morning!"

"That is a very good excuse, but I am afraid the jury will attach little weight to it," said the Judge, with his ironical smile. "You have admitted too much to stop half way. It would be vastly better for you to mention frankly and fully what you had to do with Mr. Wigan, the banker, and what you did with him."

But Richard Dunsing shook his head.

"I have allowed myself to be caught, and have said things which I should never have mentioned to any human being. I admit appearances are against me; but that is all. I have had no meeting with Mr. Wigan on that evening. That is the truth; I swear it by God."

The Judge saw that his prisoner had made up his mind to say no more, and his obstinacy seemed to be very determined. He was, therefore, content with the result of this first examination, and sent Dunsing back to his cell.

Then, after a short interval, he sent for Molitor and when the young man came, he told him all that had happened between him and Dunsing.

"We are in an embarrassing position," he concluded, being evidently put out. "Here we are with two men in prison, both of whom we charge with the murder of Mr. Wigan. Between us, be it said, I would be ready to swear that both are guilty, although I see very clearly that they cannot have acted in concert."

"I cannot yet come to any conclusion," replied the Commissary. "It is extremely probable that Dunsing has committed the crime, and on the other hand, for the last few weeks, my doubts of the American's guilt have increased from day to day. John Grover does not look to me as if he were made of the material of which hardened criminals are made. And now that he turns out to be the banker's own brother—"

"Ah! Don't speak of that notion again!" broke in Judge Feilen impatiently. "I wish John Grover had never set his foot on our soil! Which of the two is the murderer, I ask you?"

"Perhaps neither of them," was the prompt reply. "I must confess I am at my wits end. All our investigations have been fruitless, and I come to think that only a chance, perhaps a trifling, little accident, can throw some light upon this complicated affair."

"But we must get light," said the Judge, rising and walking up and down in the narrow room. Then he turned to his young friend once more and said: "Be kind enough to find out, if there can ever have been any link between Dunsing and this American?

I do not think it likely, but it may be so after all. In the next place we shall have to find out what the relations are between Dunsing and the ex-cashier; those two men look to me like a couple of consummate scamps."

"But what about the American?" asked Molitor. "His imprisonment has made a great sensation. I am told the United States Minister has sent a new note to the President of the High Court, complaining bitterly."

"I shall give the matter up as far as it belongs to my tribunal. The Attorney-General may now take it up and find out which of the two prisoners has committed the murder. The strongest evidence is before us, that one of the two is a murderer—but which? It may happen to us after all that for want of convicting proof we let the real criminal escape!"

He said Good-bye to the Commissary in a less cordial manner than usual, turned to his papers, and was soon again deeply absorbed in the provoking case.

CHAPTER XV.

Whit-Sunday had come and all nature clothed itself in green once more. Forest and bush displayed the richest and freshest colors that fall to their share at this season, and the birds were delightedly sing-

ing their love-songs and the praise of their Maker. The streets of the great city were filled with gay, happy people, who enjoyed being out in the fresh, open air, basking in the bright sunlight and drinking in with joy the pure, bracing air. Merry crowds of children filled the City Parks with their songs and their cries; all the benches under the broad-branching linden-trees were closely packed with people, and passers-by would look up to open windows and greet friends, whom they had not seen for many months.

In the modest flat, which the banker's widow and her daughter occupied, sadness and anxiety prevailed, and little was seen of sunlight, flower-perfumes and birds' merry singing. Like a thief in the night, sickness had come to try the poor mother's patience in a new form. The delicate lady, who had for twenty years been surrounded by luxury, and enjoyed every tender care and attention that love and gratitude can think of, now of a sudden lost her strength, and soon suffered from utter prostration. With the best will, she could no longer do any work that might have helped them in paying their way. The embroideries, also, at which the daughter was indefatigably at work from the earliest morning light till late at night, were but poorly paid, while the physician and the druggist sent in bill after bill. The two women tried their best to practice the most minute economy, but with all their efforts they were continually in arrears. Molitor had, of course, tried to offer his services in the most delicate manner, but

Mrs. Wigan had met the first hint in so very cold and haughty a manner, that he would have felt deeply wounded, if she had not, the next moment, seized his hand and, pressing it cordially, said:

"You are a dear, kind-hearted man—but let us not mention that again. We have all we need—have we not, my child? And God will help us, I am sure!"

It was mainly the renewed cheerfulness of her daughter which supported Mrs. Wigan. Almost all day long she was compelled to lie on her couch, for she had long since lost the strength to sit up. Erna was sitting close by her, indefatigably at work, and yet finding time to amuse her mother with her constant prattle. To be sure, the tears would often come to the older lady's eyes when she thought of the contrast between former days and now: she, who had been the Queen at balls and entertainments, now compelled to work for her daily bread! "Past! Past!" she would sigh, and the tears would overflow, streaming down the poor, lean cheeks.

But when this happened, the young girl would throw down her work, and embracing the patient's neck with both arms, and kissing her face again and again, she would say:

"No tears, Mamma, no tears! I cannot see them! You see how happy I am, and if things sometimes look black, we know God is on high and never forgets those who trust in him! Things will mend, I am confident. And then your cheeks will turn red again, your eyes will shine brightly as of old, and

we will take such charming walks! Yes, walks, mamma! You see so much more when you are afoot; in the carriage you only catch a glimpse of everything and it is gone; but on foot, oh! you see everything! When you are well again, we shall stroll about, examine every shrub and every flower. Yes, Mamma, and then we shall look forward to a fairer future!"

The poor sufferer smiled feebly; she could not answer: the future was still dark and dismal before her mind's eye. But, after a pause, she drew Erna's head to her breast and whispered:

"My dear, sweet Erna! Yes, I will pray to God that He give me my health back! I cannot bear the thought, darling, of parting with you, before I know that your future is secured. That is my one great prayer!"

The daughter blushed suddenly and turned her head aside. This changed the current of the mother's thoughts also, and threatening her child with her forefinger, she added, smiling:

"Yes, yes, I know! Mrs. Tibbeck has betrayed you. This great lady lets herself be escorted home, when she returns from her professional out-goings! They tell me of a handsome, gentlemanly young man, who wears the uniform of a Commissary of the Police!"

"Oh, Mamma, you must not talk so! I never think of such things," replied the daughter, hiding her face in her mother's bosom. "I am much too old for that, and too serious!"

"At nineteen!" replied the mother, laughing aloud. "You dear little child."

"Oh, you do not know, Mamma, how old a woman feels herself to be when she has had such bitter experiences," answered Erna, much pleased in having caused her mother to laugh heartily and to forget the present for a few moments.

But such happy moments became rarer and rarer in the modest little house. The poor mother was fading away visibly from day to day; the stern, resolute expression, that had formerly dwelt in her features, was disappearing, and gave way to sweet resignation and profound peace. Erna's rosy cheeks, too, paled more and more; but she made noble efforts to keep her mother in ignorance of all that caused her such anxiety. It was mutual heroism that these two ladies displayed when they were together; but no sooner did they find themselves alone, than they gave free course to their tears, seeking relief for their over-burdened hearts.

After Whit-Sunday a great misfortune befell Erna. The bad times—as people in trade and in business called it—set in, and with great regret the merchant, for whom she had been doing her embroidery work, told her that for the next three months he would not be able to sell any more of her work. When he saw the poor girl's face turn ghastly pale at this blow, he added kindly that she might return in Fall, when times, he hoped, would be better again. He even promised to help her first of all in her line, since he had been specially pleased with her embroideries.

But this praise and this promise for the future were of little avail for the poor girl. She had earned such a pittance only by her work, that it barely sufficed to pay their daily bread; to lay up, even a trifle, had been out of her power. Her mother's sickness required too much and, often as the old lady remonstrated, Erna would have suffered hunger rather than leave one of the doctor's prescriptions unattended to.

Her next step was to try other shops, where such work as she made was for sale; but all was in vain. The state of the market was unusually depressed and everywhere her applications were rejected, courteously, but absolutely. Yes, they told her, in Autumn there would be demand again for such work, but now, for the summer-season, when everybody went out of town, there was no market for such wares. Days and days were spent in this unsuccessful endeavor to find employment, and night after night poor Erna returned, disappointed and almost broken-hearted.

Once she had met Molitor and accepted his offer to see her home, whereupon the two ladies had asked him to stay and take tea with them. Full of warmest sympathy, he had tried to ascertain how they managed to live, but the young girl was too proud, and she would rather have faced death than to let him know what she suffered.

And now began for the poor ladies the most trying period of their lives, whilst outside all was sunshine and joyousness. Fortunately, their rent was

prepaid for three months, so that Mrs. Tibbeck did not suffer. But a few days later, the daily bread began literally to fail them; they had no money to buy anything, and to buy on credit they dared not. With ineffable grief the mother saw how her child denied herself even the necessary things to provide all that she wanted. All their little jewels and ornaments had long since been sold; only the antique and probably very costly medallion, the last relic of her dearly beloved Johannes, the mother still wore on her heart. If in old times anybody had hinted at the possibility of her ever disposing of this precious memorial, she would have replied: "Rather death than that!"

At last the crisis came. One day, when Erna had once more gone out to see if she could not secure some kind of work, however hard it might be, the mother formed a sudden resolve that was to affect the lives of all of them in the most surprising manner. She sent for her landlady, Mrs. Tibbeck, who came from the kitchen, where she had been at work, with a thousand apologies for her appearance. After exchanging their compliments, the poor widow began:

"I would like to ask you a very great favor, dear Mrs. Tibbeck, but you must promise me to keep it a profound secret, even from my daughter."

Great curiosity appeared instantly on the face of the landlady.

"Well, and what can it be?" she asked, full of

expectation. "Surely you do not want to borrow money of me, for I have not any!"

A burning blush covered the poor invalid's pale face at this rude speech, and a low groan escaped from her lips.

"What I have to ask, is unfortunately connected with money, but not that way," she said, after a pause, uncertain whether she should trust this woman or not. "You know, of course, how our means have, of late, been short of our wants. I am a very sick invalid, ready to die every moment, and—"

"No, no! Don't say that, dear Mrs. Wigan," broke in the visitor. "You will see how quickly you will recover—you are still so young! I thought of you only the other day—how unfit this close, damp dwelling is for you. I was out in the country at my brother-in-law's, in Windenow; he has the coziest little house in the heart of a lonely pine-forest. There you ought to live—that would do good to your poor lungs."

A low groan escaped the sad sufferer, and a dreamy smile played for a while around her pale lips as she conjured up the alluring picture.

"Yes, indeed; that would do me good!" she repeated at last. "Sunshine and the cool, fresh air of the forest, bright flowers in the meadows and the merry song of little birds high up in the branches —and then the playful, tiny springs, and shy, but curious deer coming cautiously forth to look at the stranger—ah! Great God! I can feel it now, and

merely to think of it gives me rest and peace at once." She paused, exhausted, a few minutes and then continued: "But we must remain in real life. What is the use of all these fancies, all these dreams of ours, when the stern reality forbids the very idea of such enjoyment. But you see," she added, approaching her lips close to the listener's ears, so as to be able to speak with less effort: "You see, Erna can no longer find a sale for her work, and I am forced to see, with truly bleeding heart, that she is getting thinner and thinner every day."

"Yes, the poor dear child," chimed in Mrs. Tibbeck. "I have told my daughter, often enough, what good luck she had, even in her early youth, when she was taught to work and to know how to support herself. Such a poor, noble lady, lives and lives, and when misery comes she knows nothing, and cannot help herself, much less others."

Mrs. Wigan suffered intensely at such reproach, and again it took her several minutes before she gathered courage to present her petition.

"Help must be found," she said, "not for myself, but for the poor child. What I wish you to do, dear Mrs. Tibbeck, is to help me in selling an object of great value."

"Oh! if that is all," came the prompt reply, "that I am quite used to do. You see, dear Mrs. Wigan, in winter my husband is not unfrequently out of work, and thus I go to the pawnbroker's; and so it is in summer, too, when I have regularly to carry the Sunday clothes on Monday morning to be

pledged till I redeem them again on Saturday. You need not be ashamed to be seen there. Why, great people come there in their stylish carriages, and beg the man who values their fine things to add a few marks more, as if they were as poor as we are."

"Yes, I know, my dear friend; but we must settle our little business first, before Erna comes home; she must not know a word about it. Besides, I do not speak of pawning—when would I ever be in a position to redeem any valuables? I want to sell and to see to it that I do not lose too much in selling a very valuable article."

"And what is it? Is it real gold—or, perhaps, diamonds?" Mrs. Tibbeck asked with eager curiosity.

"Both," sighed the poor lady, sighing deeply. "I part with it most reluctantly; but my child's health, perhaps even her life, is at stake."

With these words she drew the medallion from under her dress, where it had rested so many years, looked at it awhile with the bitter tears flowing down her cheeks, and loosening the heavy gold chain which held it, she handed it to her visitor.

"You will be sure," she added, "to go early in the morning, before Erna is about? Go to the best jeweler you know, make him give you the largest sum of money he is willing to pay, and give it to me when my daughter is not present."

The woman nodded eagerly with her head, and gazed at the medallion as the widow handed it to her.

"But what is this!" she exclaimed suddenly, when

she had examined it all around. "Why, this is funny!"

"What? What do you mean, Mrs. Tibbeck?"

The landlady shook her head wondering; then she went to the window the better to examine the jewel, and stammered in broken accents:

"But, no! This is too strange! I never in my life saw such a resemblance!"

"What do you mean—pray tell me?" asked the poor lady.

"Well, that medallion there!" was the answer. "Upon my soul, it is exactly the same thing as the big watch which my husband has inherited from his uncle on the mother's side."

"That cannot very well be," replied Mrs. Wigan, shaking her head. "This medallion is over a hundred years old, of very peculiar, artistic interest, and of great value. I can hardly imagine, dear Mrs. Tibbeck, that your husband's uncle should have been in a position to leave him such a watch. To be sure, there was one such watch which most closely resembled this medallion, since the same master's hand had produced both of them; but—"

"No! no! I am right!" contradicted the landlady. "Just wait a moment, and I'll convince you."

In a few minutes she returned with a cunning smile on her face, and holding something carefully concealed under her apron. Cautiously she crept up to the sick lady's bed, and whispered:

"You see, Madame, you must know my husband

is a very peculiar man. If he can hear of my having a quarter of a mark, he is sure to get hold of it in some way; then he puts it into his pocket and keeps it there, where it does not do me any good, nor any other human being. What can I do? I must retaliate. Often, in the depth of the night, I get up and search his pockets—and I almost always find something there. Now, he did precisely so with his uncle's inheritance. He never told me a word about it, that he inherited such a beautiful gold watch from his uncle. But we women know how to find out our husband's secrets; and thus one night I got up and searched every pocket of his, and lo and behold! here it was, the most beautiful gold watch I ever saw in my life. And not only that, but in a secret compartment of an old cupboard which he bought and skillfully repaired, I found he kept a red morocco pocket-book—no doubt another part of his uncle's inheritance. That is what made me start so when I saw your medallion; it is as like the gold watch with the heavy gold chain, as one egg is like another."

The poor widow had received a violent shock. All of a sudden a sharp pain cut through every part of her body, she half rose from her couch and gazed with intense amazement at her landlady.

"What did you say, Mrs. Tibbeck? A red morocco pocket-book? A gold watch with a heavy gold chain? Great God! And how did your husband fall heir to such an unexpected inheritance?"

"Let me think a moment," replied the good

women, still carefully concealing the valuable objects under her apron. "Yes, to be sure I remember, it was the tenth of February."

"And the watch!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigan, in such painful excitement that she could hardly maintain herself upright on her lounge, "that watch—you have—in your hands?"

"Yes, indeed! Just look at it! Here it is! No, did you ever see two things so much alike?" she replied, and produced the desired object.

The poor suffering lady no sooner cast a look upon the very large, but most artistically engraven time-piece, the outside of which bore a cooing pair of turtle-doves, then she uttered a low cry and sank back into her cushions, utterly exhausted.

"But what is the matter with you, dear Mrs. Wigan?" cried the landlady, still unsuspecting and eagerly trying to help the fainting lady.

"Never mind me! Never mind!" whispered the poor sufferer, trying again and again to raise herself, so as to sit up. "And this watch," she stammered at last, "this watch, you say, your husband has inherited?"

"Well, of course! His uncle, on the mother's side, as I told you before."

"That is not true!" suddenly cried Mrs. Wigan, her eyes flaming up with unexpected vigor. "That is not true! There is not, I tell you, any second watch in this world, like this! This watch was the property of my poor husband, and it was stolen

from him in the night from the ninth to the tenth of February!"

The effect of these words on Mrs. Tibbeck was fearful. The poor woman stood for a few moments as if struck by lightning, with open mouth and staring eyes. Then life returned, as it were, and she clapped her hands as in despair, while she cried out:

"But, great God! How can you think such a thing?" Then, as if doubtful whether to cry or to quarrel: "We are honest people! We do not do such things! Steal a watch! How can you think of it, Madame! This watch! This watch! No, I tell you, we are no thieves! How dare you say such a thing?"

"Mrs. Tibbeck, come close up to me," stammered the poor sufferer. "Convince yourself! There can be no doubt! Just look!"

She pressed a spring and the back of the watch opened instantly.

"Now read!" she added, trembling with excitement and pointing at a cunningly interwoven monogram.

"Andreas Wigan!" read the landlady, turning deadly pale. "Andreas Wigan!" she repeated mechanically, and stared with wide open eyes at the poor woman in her grief. "Great God!" she cried. "What can this mean! What can it be!"

For some minutes a painful stillness reigned in the room.

"But my husband certainly inherited this watch

from his uncle on the mother's side, and—" Mrs. Tibbeck began once more.

"You said something of a red pocket-book?" said Mrs. Wigan.

"For God's sake, what do you mean?"

"Do you not know that my husband was robbed of such a one, when he was murdered?"

"No! no! I cannot have said any such thing!" cried the landlady fiercely, hardly knowing in her ineffable distress what she was saying. "It was not exactly a pocket-book, such as gentleman generally have in their pockets. There was no money in this —nothing—only a few papers—of no value at all!"

"The money may have been taken out before. Please let me see that pocket-book!" said Mrs. Wigan, imploringly, and seemed almost to have forgotten her great suffering, while a youthful, living fire once more shone in her eyes.

"No! But who could have thought!" suddenly cried Mrs. Tibbeck, sobbing fiercely and carrying her apron to her eyes. "There must be some mistake about it! My husband is innocent! He does not do such things! Oh, Great God! If I had but kept silence! Why must I need talk of what concerned nobody!"

She paused, utterly exhausted by her excitement and her fears. Unable to endure it all, she sank into a chair, and concealing her face with both hands, she gave free course to her tears.

Mrs. Wigan, also, was leaning back in her cushions, utterly exhausted and overcome by fearful excite-

ment. This revelation, at the brink of extreme suffering, which suddenly opened a new view and held out a new hope of fathoming the mystery of the murder, was too much for her—she felt helpless as a mere infant. What was to be done? She dared not pursue the thoughts which so suddenly crowded her mind. How could this man have gotten possession of these two precious and unmistakable objects? He must be the murderer! And if so, what was to become of his family? They had ever been most kind to them both, mother and daughter! Lina, the hearty, fair-faced maid with the true blue eyes, was on the point of being married; her lover was a young man of sterling character, proud of his good name—how would he receive the news? Such thoughts filled the poor lady's mind in wild confusion, and her heart nearly broke as she thought of the terrible effects of such a discovery. But, on the other side, was there not the happiness of her own child at stake, the restoration of her husband's honest name, and the clearing up of a fearful mystery? Could she hesitate? Was it not her duty at once to summon Commissary Molitor, and to inform him of what accident had so strangely brought to her knowledge.

Suddenly the landlady jumped up; anger seemed to have gotten the better of the poor woman.

"There! I hear my husband's steps. He is coming home from his work. He shall tell you that we are plain but honest people," she cried in a furious voice. "Of course, it is barely possible that your hus-

band had also such a watch, but this my husband has inherited from his uncle on the mother's side. Thus—" Here she suddenly paused, overcome by a sudden thought. "But, to be sure, he was never to know that I had found out his secret! But never mind! Where such an insult has been cast upon us —let him scold me—I sha'n't mind it." She took the watch and hastened out.

In the meantime daylight had waned and the room was nearly dark. Through the open window the balmy spring air flowed in, and from the street resounded merry laughter and cheerful sounds. Countless numbers of children of both sexes were playing their games, and filled the air with their happy cries and songs. But suddenly loud, overwhelming cries of distress were heard, and Mrs. Wigan, trembling, listened. She heard distinctly the hoarse, passionate voice of the joiner and then the loud sobs and groans of his wife. This continued perhaps ten minutes. Then a tremendous noise broke in, doors were banged and closed with violence, and heavy, weighty steps of a man were heard descending the stairs.

Immediately after this the door of Mrs. Wigan's room was torn open, and with loud cries and passionate sobs, poor Mrs. Tibbeck rushed in, threw herself on her knees at the poor lady's lounge, and cried:

"Oh, God! oh, God! My husband! My husband! Who could have thought it? Oh, God! Dear Mrs. Wigan! My husband! My own husband!"

The poor, exhausted lady could offer no reply. She looked with dread, not unmixed with horror, at the poor distracted woman, who, like people in her station, knew not how to bridle her passions, and gave unbounded license to her wrath and her despair. This continued a long time—how long, the poor sick mother never knew; she was too entirely overcome by the sudden excitement, the noise and the turmoil, and the apprehension of what would be the next step in the solution of this great, mysterious crime, that had deprived her, at one blow, of all her happiness in life.

It was quite dark when Erna at last rushed breathless into the room, and knelt down at her mother's side. The delighted mother passed her hand caressingly over the smooth, waving masses of hair, and exclaimed:

"Is it you at last, Erna? At last! You have been out so much later than usual. God be thanked that I have you near me again. You little know how much I miss you when you are away so long a time."

"Oh, Mamma, I am so happy!"

The poor mother felt in the darkness how her cheeks were glowing with intense excitement; she seized her hand and felt how the blood coursed through the veins at a very unusual rate. "Happy, you say, my child! How is that? Tell me!" Her thoughts were so far away at this moment from her daughter's welfare, that she hardly knew what she was saying, and yet she wondered what could

have made her pale, shrinking Erna, all at once so happy.

"So happy!" exclaimed Erna, in exuberance of joy. "But, dearest Mamma, have you really never guessed anything—did you really know nothing till to-day?"

Mrs. Wigan tried to make her thoughts forsake the time of the watch and the robbery, and thus she asked, quite uncertain:

"Know nothing! What do you mean, child?"

"That he loves me! Oh! he is so good and dear. Look, Mamma, look at the past as gone, like a bad dream. I think I shall make him happy, as his wife. And you, dearest Mamma, you will live with us, and we will nurse you and coddle you till you are quite well and strong again."

Now Mrs. Wigan could not help smiling.

"You little whirlwind you, of whom are you speaking? What is this revelation you are making? Who is this He? I did not know you knew anybody? I hope it is not—"

"Oh, Mamma dear, I am so happy!" cried Erna, rising from her knees and embracing with almost violent heartiness the beloved mother's neck. "Just think! he has all this time escorted me home every evening, and always talked so nicely and sweetly, but I never, never thought of such a thing. Great God! I always thought I was too old to be noticed in that way. But now, as I walked by his side, I often thought: What a fine, imposing-looking man he is—how happy the woman who one of these days

will walk through life by his side, well sheltered and protected! And to think! this evening as he was going to say good-bye, he suddenly seized both my hands and said, looking me straight in the eyes: 'Erna, dear Erna, I did not mean to speak, but I can keep it a secret no longer: will you be my wife, my true helpmate?' And then, Mamma, I do not know this moment how I ever gathered courage to say 'Yes,' but I did it."

"Oh, God! Do you really mean Mr. Molitor?" stammered the mother in her excitement.

"Of course! Did I not tell you it was Rolf?" the girl stammered, bashfully hiding her face in her mother's bosom.

"Praise be to God!" exclaimed Mrs. Wigan. "Thou sendest trials, but thou also sendest blessings. Now I am happy! Now I know my child is safe, and now do Thou unto me as it is Thy pleasure!"

The young girl clung closely to her mother's heart and, overwhelmed by happiness and rejoicing, she began to sob violently.

Long they were sitting thus, hand resting in hand, with darkness all around them, shedding happy tears, till suddenly renewed cries and sobs reminded the happy widow of less happy people. Erna also heard the loud plaints, and asked:

"Oh, Mamma, I'll light the lamp. What can have happened here?"

"Much has happened here, my child," answered the mother in a low, subdued manner.

The young girl had quickly run to the matchbox

and was now lighting a lamp. Then, when the cosy light fell upon her mother's anxious face, she started, gazed at the care-worn features, and cried:

"But dearest Mamma, how you look! What is the matter with you? Are you not glad at what I have told you? Do you sympathize so little with your happy child?"

"No, no, my sweet, dear daughter—you know you could not have made me happier. But such marvelous things have happened here in your absence—it really begins to look as if the succession of trials, to which we were looking forward, might at last be broken and brought to an end. But, unfortunately, we cannot be made happy, it seems, without making others very, very unhappy. And this is what makes me so unspeakably unhappy, that we should only be freed from sorrow and suffering by seeing the burden placed upon others."

"But what do you mean, dearest Mamma? You speak in riddles. I cannot understand you."

The poor widow shook her head. "Nothing has happened that could interfere with you or your happiness!" she replied. "Do not ask me now! Enjoy your happiness! May God bless you!"

Once more she seized the head of her daughter with both hands, and drawing her close to her heart, she pressed a long, hot kiss upon the pure virgin brow.

CHAPTER XVI.

Rolf Molitor was just going to leave his office and to return home, when the policeman on duty entered and reported that the mechanic Tibbeck was there, and wished anxiously to see the Commissary. The latter was surprised, but after trying to read the man's face, he ordered his visitor in at once.

So many mysteries had gradually come to surround this remarkable murder case, and it had always been in connection with this strange man, Tibbeck, that new revelations had come to him, that the young officer could not refrain from advancing to meet him, and from saying at once:

"But, man, what's up? What on earth is the matter now?"

Then, seeing the man's exhausted state, he seized him by the shoulders and almost by main force compelled him to sit down.

For several minutes the man sat still and immovable; only his eyes were wandering restlessly over the room. His breath came in broken, unintelligible sounds; his lips were wide open, and, when at last

he began to speak, it was in hoarse, barely audible accents.

"Ah, Mr. Molitor, I must, I must confess, I am an arch-bad man! But what they accuse me of is not true. I did not commit murder! I am not so bad as that!"

Molitor looked at the man and was more and more puzzled by his conduct. For a moment he thought Tibbeck might be drunk, but a glance at his imploring eye removed that suspicion.

"Can the man have lost his mind—can he be insane?" he next asked himself.

Almost unconscious of what he was doing, he approached his strange visitor, seized him by the shoulders, and said, encouraging him:

"Come, out with it, my man! What is it? What nonsense are you talking of—of murder?"

"No, no!" cried the wretched creature. "No! There is not a word of truth in that, as sure as the Almighty will be merciful to me in my last hour! I cannot kill a fly—much less a human being! Oh, me! Oh, me!"

"Who accuses you of such a crime? Why don't you speak? Explain the matter!"

"Alas!" said the joiner, at last stammering; "it is all about that red morocco pocket-book—and that watch!"

"Man!" exclaimed the Commissary once more, and seizing the visitor's arm with an iron grasp, forced him to look into his face. "What are you talking? What about a watch?"

"The banker's watch—Mr. Wigan's watch, whose wife and daughter are living in my house. Oh, what a cursed luck! I knew it would not end well! Who would have dreamed that of all women on earth his widow had to be the one to rent rooms of me! Without that, all would have gone well. But now—"

"By Heaven, man, you talk like an old washerwoman!" cried Molitor, really angry and stamping on the floor.

This had the desired effect. Tibbeck cast an anxious look at the officer.

"Speak out, like a sensible man," said Molitor, crossing his arms over his breast and looking at the excited man with stern but not hostile eyes. "If I understand you, you are accused of being an accomplice in Mr. Wigan's murder?"

"By no means! For God's sake, Mr. Commissary, don't say that!" The man groaned and his pale lips trembled so that he could hardly speak. "I cannot harm a fly, I told you, much less a human being! But that watch and that chain!"

"Well, and what of those two things? Out with it!"

"Alas! You do not know, Mr. Molitor, all that has happened to-day at my house. I wish I had thrown myself into the water. Ah! the women, the women, can they never hold their tongues! That's the way it always begins: first, they inspect my trouser's pockets, and then, through their shameless curiosity, I am sent first to jail and then to the—"

He did not utter the word "Penitentiary" that was on his tongue, but he once more turned pale and his eyes began again to wander restlessly all around the room.

"Well, if any one can understand what you mean, I cannot!" exclaimed Molitor, impatiently. "The best you can do is to stay here over night, and to-morrow morning, early, you can tell the Judge the whole story. I have not time to listen to your nonsense."

These energetically uttered words had the desired effect.

"For God's sake," cried the poor, helpless man, "don't do that! The Judge is not half as good to me as you are. You see, I know you and I have confidence in you. You have also been good to my wife, and my daughter Lina is fond of you. My wife told me I must go straight to you and tell you the whole story, and you would advise me, she said, for everybody could read in my face that I was not a man to commit murder."

"Well, then, tell me the whole story as briefly as you can, just as it is," said Molitor, trying to encourage the man.

"Well, then, the story is thus: You know, Mr. Commissary, what a misfortune it is to have bad friends; they carried me from one drinking shop to another, from one beer garden to another, but work we never did, for we were all on a strike. At last the misery was too great; the house was empty, we had nothing we could pawn any more. I had

not a penny left to buy bread. Just then somebody says: 'They want workmen in Greenough.' My wife heard this, and said: 'To-morrow you march out to Greenough.' You know the way to Greenough goes through Seaton, along the turnpike. Well, I did not get off till after dinner; it was the ninth of February, and a heavy snow was falling. The road was slippery and it took one three good hours to get to Greenough. After I inquired, they told me all the work that there was had been given away; hundreds had been there before me, all starving, and nobody cared for me. Well, I could not die of hunger; so I went into the tavern. My good wife had given me the last piece of money she had, and told me: 'When you get work, you may open this and drink a glass as soon as you have gotten work to do!' Well, I was desperate; I did not care. There were some fifty men there, all had come to get work; like myself, all were reduced to their last penny and in a pretty savage temper. You ought to have heard them, how they cursed and swore. However, they were not as bad as they talked. When they found that I had not had a morsel to eat or a dram to drink since the day before, one gave me a loaf and the other a glass of liquor, and a third a drink of beer, and when I chanced to look at the big clock over the door, it was ten o'clock and pitch dark outdoors. I should have liked to stay in Greenough, but the landlord could not keep fifty men or more; besides, we had talked pretty loud,

and he was afraid we might set fire to his house in our wild excitement.

"I started on my way home, but such a march! Never in my life can I forget that! Half drunk as I was, I always made two steps forward and one step back, so that it was long after midnight when I at last reached Seaton. I was dead beat, I could not go any further. On the street I saw no place to shelter me; it was out of question to lie down in the snow and slush, and cover I had none. Suddenly I remembered that I had been at work here in the summer on a new building in that very street. I knew every nook and corner of the structure and went straight to it, walking as fast as I could to escape the falling snow. But the brandy must have gotten in my head, for just as I reached the plank fence around the cellar opening I fell down.

The Commissary looked up, greatly surprised. "You say, just in front of the fence, and there you lay stretched out at full length?" he asked eagerly.

Tibbeck nodded vehemently.

"Yes, indeed!" was his reply. "After a good deal of wriggling I stretched myself out, but I was horribly uncomfortable."

"What!" exclaimed Molitor. "You lay down there on that rough and uneven surface and fell asleep? Well, that explains at least the notion we had formed of a fight between the murderer and his victim! And did you remain long in that uncomfortable position?" he turned, asking Tibbeck.

The man shook his head.

"No, fortunately I soon came to myself again, for during the night an infernal cold had set in," he replied. "The rain and the snow had made me pretty sober again. Half asleep, I pushed a few planks of the fence aside and crept behind it, to lie down there in greater safety and comfort. It was not very nice, but so much better than outside, where wind and rain blew into my face, and I soon fell asleep."

"And is all this a part of your wonderful story?" asked the Commissary, who became impatient. "You surely mean the same new building in which on the next morning Mr. Wigan's body was discovered?"

"Great Heavens! Of course I mean it," replied the joiner piteously. "I was lying there, I tell you, and dreaming, when suddenly a loud voice roused me. At first all was confusion in my head, but when I next heard a scolding voice close by me, I started, fully aroused now, and listened: 'You wretch, you do not deserve to be the brother of a human being! You are a scoundrel—worse than Cain! You have stolen the happiness of my life and enriched yourself with the poor man's lamb! You are too contemptible for me to touch you, but you shall feel my cane!' cried a deep, fearfully excited voice, and then I heard it whistle through the air: once, twice, thrice.' 'That hit him in the face!' I said to myself.

"Then I heard the other man cry out; his voice was rather high. Then there was some noise, and

as I was trying to raise myself against the fence, a man suddenly knocked against me and fell backwards over me. A lantern was standing nearby, and I could well enough see what was the row. The two men had evidently quarreled; the one who nearly upset me, had been beaten in the face, for I saw how he held both his hands before his eyes and fell blindly over me. The blow must have been tremendous; it deprived him of sight and hearing, and the unfortunate man fell first against the opening that was to be a window, lost his balance, and then, with a heart-rending cry, he tumbled backwards into the deep cellar."

"Why, that is fearful!" said the Commissary, looking sharply at Tibbeck. "If I understand you right, however, the whole affair was so terrible only because you were crouching down and the falling man lost his hold and fell through the open window into the cellar?"

"Yes, so it was, exactly so!" affirmed the man.

"But consider. Might not the other man have given the dead man such a violent push that he fell with great force against you? That would make it still more plausible, I should think."

The man shook his head, as he replied:

"No, Mr. Commissary, drunk as I was with sleep, I saw it all very distinctly. The man was fully three feet from the other. The unfortunate man was afraid —that made him jump back so readily. The whole thing, moreover, was the work of an instant. It

takes me longer to tell it than it took to happen. But I still hear the thump, thump, as the body fell—it went to my heart, I tell you, Mr. Commissary—and then, of a sudden, all was perfectly still."

"Go on! Go on!" said Mr. Molitor anxiously, excited and looking into the visitor's eyes as if he meant to read the story there.

"Well, there it is now," said Tibbeck, casting down his eyes. "If I had but let the thing alone, I would not be compelled to tell you now what a blackguard I am. At first I was petrified with horror—think of it, to be roused from your sleep by such an accident, and then to witness such a thing! I have a heart like other men, sir. First I tried to feel my way along the fence, to get into the street, and to look for the other man; but he was already far away, and I only heard him lustily cry, 'Watchman! Watchman!' He called perhaps twenty times, till the cry became so distant, I could hear it no longer. What was I to do? I went back to the window and listened, but everything was perfectly still—only now and then I thought I heard a faint rattle of a voice. Then I heard one word: 'Revenge!' if I understood it right. That was the word, I am sure, which the dying man faintly uttered. Mr. Commissary, that faint sound touched my heart. In an instant I was down where the man lay. I knew every step in the new house, where I had been at work myself for many months. I also had matches, and with their aid I made my way step by step about the cellar. To be sure! there he lay, a man,

and a horrid sight it was! I tell you, Mr. Commissary, I am not generally a coward and do not readily shed tears and howl, but when I saw this, my heart nearly stopped beating. All about the place was covered with blood, and then this nice-looking gentleman! As I was looking around thus, the light of a match falls upon a heavy gold watch-chain, that shone and glittered on his waistcoat. Then the devil got hold of me and whispered to me that the dead man had no longer any use for his watch and chain, while we would be happy for life if we had them.

"While I was still standing there and reflecting, I heard steps above me and a rough voice calling out: 'Has anybody fallen in here?' I had no matches left, and thus neither I nor the dead body could be seen from above. Oh! if I had then called out, as my first impulse was! But, unfortunately, Satan held my tongue, and I kept as quiet as a mouse, not daring even to breathe, lest the watchman in the street should find me out. He went back again to his post, and soon his steps died away in the distance. And now, Mr. Commissary, I must make my confession: I became a thief! I took the dead man's watch, and as my fingers went about looking for his pockets, they came across a pocket-book first, and then across his porte-monnaie. Mr. Commissary, I took them both! It was slow work, and I burnt up all of my matches in the search. All of a sudden, as I felt about in the dark, the dead man was lying on his stomach. This frightened me out

of my wits and I ran away, and I felt as if the Devil himself were riding on my back. Never in my life have I had such a run as I made that night—I did not recover till I found myself standing under a street-lamp and examining the red morocco pocket-book. In the porte-monnaie alone there were nearly one hundred marks, and in the pocket-book was nearly ten times as much money."

"You were standing near the street-lamp," here broke in Molitor, after having attentively listened to the man, so far, in absolute silence; "there you examined the papers, and probably some of them dropped out of the pocket-book and fell down?"

"That may well have been," replied Tibbeck, "for I paid no attention; but I am sure it was none of the bigger notes."

"Then you confess having robbed the body of the unfortunate banker," said the official in a very serious tone, and unable to banish the expression of horror from his features, "and finally you even turned it around."

"I did."

"That explains, then, the unnatural position of the murdered man," said the Commissary, thoughtfully. "Well, and what did you do after that?"

"I hardly know how I reached home, but I formed a plan and to that I have adhered. We really expected to fall heirs to an uncle, and I told my wife a falsehood, that the uncle had really died and left us our share. I knew I would have to give her some of the money; so I told her I had been at the

surrogates and gotten all. I gave her about a thousand marks, but the rest I kept."

That was on the forenoon of February 10th?" inquired Molitor. "You brought the money home and gave your wife a part—but how about the watch and the pocket-book?"

"I did not care to let my wife see them, because the watch had the name of the banker engraved on the case and his monogram was embroidered on the pocket-book, as I noticed next morning. First I had hid them in the straw of some of our beds; but then I took them out and concealed them in a secret compartment of my bureau. I thought my wife never knew that; but it seems she found it out, and saw me even put something into it."

"And why did you not try to sell your watch?"

"Yes, I thought of it; but then, you see, it was described in the newspapers most minutely, and was such a very costly thing in itself—people would have wondered and asked how we poor people came to have such precious things?"

"And with the money you had taken from the murdered man you fitted up your new house, I suppose?" asked the Commissary.

"Yes, indeed! Great Heavens! If I had only remained what I was, a good, honest man," lamented Tibbeck again, completely broken down now, and crushed by the confession he had made. "How happy we could be now, I and my family at home."

The Commissary looked at him for some time in deep silence.

"You have certainly committed most grievous sins," he said at last, slowly and very solemnly. "But," he added, in a softer voice and milder manner, "I hope the judges will be lenient in consideration of your open and free confession."

He once more paused, plunged into deep meditation; then he suddenly asked once more: "You say you heard outside heavy blows falling, as if somebody were beating a person with a club or a stick? Did you not think then, that a murder was being committed?"

"By no means, Mr. Commissary," was the prompt reply. "Did I not tell you that I heard distinctly what was spoken? The banker was perfectly conscious, and the light of the street-lamp fell so clearly upon him, that I could very clearly see his hat was still on his head—it must have fallen off and rolled away when he fell into the cellar."

"Yes, a gray silk hat was found inside the plank fence!" said the Commissary. "There is little doubt, I think, that the terrible calamity was the result of unfortunate accidents. The poor banker! 'In the midst of life we are in death!' Well, Tibbeck," he added, after a moment, "I must, of course, send you to jail, but you need not weep and wail on that account. Your deposition has impressed me very favorably, and I hope the Judge of the Higher Court, also, will not be too severe with you."

The poor fellow's eyes suddenly filled with tears, and he said, piteously:

"Ah, Mr. Commissary, it is not for my sake that

I grieve—I deserve being shut up in prison till I turn black. But you see, sir, there is my poor wife and our child; they have but just begun to see both ends meet once more, and lo and behold! It is all a delusion! And if I only could go out and get work—it should not be my fault, if they had not plenty to eat and to drink. But if I go to jail again—who will provide for them? If I ever am a free man again, I shall most assuredly work as hard as any two men, and wife and child shall never know what is want again."

"Well, you have very good intentions, my man," replied Molitor. "Now see that you act up to them."

Then he sent the man to a cell, and went directly to the office of the higher Judge, before whom the case would be brought. But he found it locked, and when he looked at his watch, he saw, to his surprise, that it was nine o'clock, and no chance left him to see the Judge before the next day.

Tibbeck's confession had relieved him at least of one heavy burden that had rested on his mind. Although he had to confess that for once all his acuteness and often-praised mental powers had only led him to take a wrong path, and to pursue in a wrong direction, he was yet quite willing to forfeit his reputation, if he could but establish the innocence of an accused murderer and, perhaps, convince the authorities that there had been no real crime committed.

Much elated by these sentiments, Molitor had left

the office; on his way home he had met with Erna Wigan and, forming a sudden resolution, he had asked her to become his wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

Deeply and sincerely repenting, Tibbeck repeated, on the next morning, his whole confession before the Judge, in almost the same words he had used before the Commissary. On the other hand, the Judge was much less lenient and ready to admit the man's penitence, than Molitor had been. At first, he thought he noticed inconsistencies in the man's various statements, and then he began to suspect that he admitted so much only in order to avoid more serious complications. He cross-examined him at great length, but the prisoner remained faithful to the truth, and the Judge finally thought better of him. As a matter of course, however, the prisoner had to return to his cell, and now the American was once more sent for.

"Mr. Grover," he began, in a more kindly and courteous tone than he had heretofore used, "I have sent for you once more, in order to inform you that certain inquiries have of late resulted in evidence, which, under certain circumstances, may lead to your being set free. But before I am able to do anything for you in that direction, I must once

more insist upon being told the truth and the whole truth. You have never yet fully established your identity."

Molitor who, at the Judge's request, had remained present at this decisive interview, had so far kept modestly in the background; now he advanced and with a courteous gesture of the hand towards the Judge, he said:

"Will your Honor permit me to ask this gentleman a few questions?"

The Judge looked up astonished, but he consented at once by a nod of the head.

"Then I beg leave to inform Mr. Grover that, according to our German law, no man can be held responsible for the crime of murder if, since the last judicial action in the prosecution, twenty years have elapsed. The last judicial act in the case called Kunert's Murder, took place on June 29th, 1869—to-day is the fourteenth July, 1889; consequently more than twenty years have elapsed since that day, and even a well-known or self-confessed murderer could not be prosecuted any longer for the crime mentioned."

A strange fire began to shine in the eyes of the mysterious American, and with a slightly trembling voice he asked:

"Is this really so? Is it not perhaps a new pitfall to make me—?"

Here he suddenly stopped as if afraid of having said too much.

"You forget, sir, that you are dealing with Ger-

man officers of the law," said the Judge sternly, seeing now what Mr. Molitor was trying to ascertain.

The American had evidently a short struggle to endure in his heart. Then he suddenly advanced, and drawing himself up to his whole length, he said resolutely:

"I am Johannes Wigan!"

For a moment all was silent in the room. Then a pleased smile passed over Molitor's features, and the young man, advancing, said with delight:

"Will your Honor permit me to repay Mr. Grover's revelation by making another revelation of interest to him? My researches, most carefully and indefatigably carried on, have finally established the fact that the man Kunert was not murdered, but killed by this present Johannes Wigan in self-defense. We have a witness, free from all objection and of good repute, who was present at the occurrence, and is at all times ready to testify on oath the facts as I have stated."

"Ada! No one but Ada can do that!" stammered the American, and a sunny smile illumined his careworn features. "Ah! how different all would have been, if she had not kept silent!"

"She had to be silent," replied the Commissary, with deep emotion. "She could not do otherwise—for did not she, and did not everybody, believe that Johannes Wigan was dead, had perished in a railway disaster? But every year of her life she faithfully made a pilgrimage to that grave, in a quiet, unknown village, for out of the world, and

prayed there for him who, she believed, was there resting under the green grass."

"Ada! Ada! That is like you!" cried Grover, drawing a deep breath, as if relieved of a grievous burden; "that is like you! Great God! What cursed villainy has been practised against us! Oh! the infamous scoundrel!" A few seconds he stood thus, in silent rage. Then he said resolutely: "Now you shall have the truth and the whole truth! For now I see I need spare no one, and, if Your Honor will permit me, I shall state fully all that occurred on that occasion."

The Judge assented.

"I think we have requested such a favor for many months," he added, and courteously invited his prisoner to be seated.

When this was done, the American passed his hand over his brow and began his recital:

"God is my witness, that even now I do not exactly know how I came to act in that rash and so sadly fatal manner," he declared, after having informed his two listeners of his early love for Adelaide. "But the blows that rained upon my face made me mad; my hand suddenly felt the knife, which I always carried in my pocket, between my fingers and the next moment the man lay dead at my feet. Then somebody seized my hand and cried: 'Great God! What have you done! You are a murderer! a cursed murderer! You are lost in this world and in the world to come!' Gentlemen, it was my brother who uttered these words!

"It was only many, many years later, in fact only shortly before I was arrested, that there arose in my mind a suspicion. What had at first only dawned upon me, soon became certainty: He had committed a most damnable piece of villainy, for he had purposely himself conducted Kunert to the place where he knew I met my beloved one. At that time, however, I was led to see in him my saviour. I was beside myself, and blindly obeyed all his counsels and suggestions. He was right, I must flee instantly, and I did so, fool that I was! Money I had enough and I escaped—as I thought—but without seeing Ada, without obtaining my parents' forgiveness. My brother swore the most sacred oaths that he would watch over Ada, and tell her fully and at once, why I had been compelled thus suddenly to escape. He pledged himself in like manner to procure for me, and to send me at once, her forgiveness, and promised that as soon as I had secured a new home on the other side of the Atlantic, he would bring my beloved to me. Oh, the scoundrel! the unspeakable villain! His black heart was triumphant, as he thus got rid of me forever.

"I spent the first night in a wretched little village, where a new misfortnne befell me. The inn was small, guests were many, and I had to share my bedroom with another man. He was a thief; and during the night he managed to possess himself of nearly all my money and my papers, and then disappeared. I am told he did not escape Divine

justice. Almost penniless, I reached Hamburg. I engaged as a fireman on board a steamer, and under another name, of course, I safely reached America. I found it more difficult to earn my daily bread than I had hoped; nevertheless, I wrote instantly to my brother, inquiring after Ada. It was a long time before I received an answer."

Johannes Wigan sighed deeply. He was evidently powerfully excited and with difficulty constrained himself.

"The man who called himself my brother, and to whom I was devotedly attached, cheated me out of my life's happiness. He wrote me that the shock had been too much for Ada; she had succumbed to the blow and to the ravages of a terrible fever. He described minutely how she had died with my name on her lips. The rascal! The scoundrel! He himself had begun to look at my beloved with sinful, covetous eyes; he had used his devilish cunning with such supreme skill, and aided by chance, managed to separate us for life. Ada mourned me as dead; I wept for her likewise. She who had been my own life's sun and sole hope being dead, I cared not to live any longer myself, and was very near taking my own life.

"To protect myself against such sinful thoughts, I threw myself headlong into the whirlpool of life, such as only the new world can offer to the newcomer. I was fortunate in well-nigh all I undertook, and a few years sufficed to give me a handsome fortune. But what was money to me? John

Grover, as I had called myself when I landed a fugitive on these shores, might be respected, honored and envied—the wound in his heart had never healed. Year followed year and I failed in the one great purpose of my life. I could not forget. At last, a very rich man, and henceforth independent, I could resist the temptation no longer. I made myself known to my brother, asking his forgiveness for my long silence. The answer, which came after a long interval, ought to have made me suspicious. It contained a flood of reproaches—would I, a vile murderer, come and ruin him and his honorable family? He told me that I had been publicly described as an escaped murderer, and a reward offered for my capture, and that I would be arrested and tried for murder as soon as I should put my foot on German soil.

"I believed him. Nevertheless, the desire to see my native land, to stand by the grave of her who still was dearest to me, though but a memory now, and even the longing to embrace my brother once more, and to thank him for his goodness to me and to Ada—all these were too strong, and I resolved to risk all. Of course, I informed my brother of my intentions. He said in reply that, with his vast correspondence, letters were easily lost, and besides, as the United States extradited murderers, it was of the utmost importance to use the very greatest precaution in our correspondence. He therefore proposed to send only letters marked 'To be called for,' and, in order to make it perfectly sure

that they should not fall into wrong hands, to insert a previous notice that a letter might be expected, on my side in the *New York Herald*, on his side in the *Kölnische Zeitung*. This was done.

"For a long time I hesitated. Should I gratify my brother and keep away from Germany—for I still felt indebted to him, and thought I owed his family and his friends some consideration. Great God! I little imagined who had in the meantime become his wife! At last I could resist my longing no more, and, contrary to my brother's wishes, I came to Europe.

"The rest you know pretty well," the prisoner continued after a pause, during which he repeatedly passed his hand over his brow. "I have only to add that, after my arrival here, I discovered my brother's villainy. A glance sufficed to reveal his whole game to me. I found him the husband of my dearly beloved, my betrothed! Of course our meeting was a stormy one. I must premise that I had been on the point of returning to the United States, for Germany was no longer bearable to me, now that Ada was his. Had he not taken me, with tears in abundance, to a simple tombstone on which 'Ada' was engraved, telling me that there she rested forever? At the same time he had, with diabolical cunning, succeeded in renewing my fears, that I might still be held responsible for the rash act committed in my youth.

"But just at that time I met one day in the park a carriage with two ladies, evidently mother and

daughter. I thought I was the victim of a strange delusion as I looked at the younger of the two; she was the image of my Ada! Her features had never ceased to live in my heart, and here she was suddenly before me in flesh and blood! I could barely glance next at the older of the ladies and I felt thunder-struck. Here was Ada, my Ada, not dead and buried, but alive!"

"What can I say?" he added with a sigh from the depths of his heart. "I found out what an accomplished hypocrite my brother was; I ascertained that only a few years after my presumed death he had persuaded Ada to marry him. Then came the stormy meeting to which I alluded."

"When did it take place?" asked the Judge. "Was is not on the day on which your brother called on you at your hotel and you were locked up in the same room for some hours?"

"By no means! On that day our interview was even of a friendly nature. We spoke of nothing but the past, and only locked the doors because in a hotel there are always curious ears about that love to listen to others."

"You spoke of a discovery you made in the City Park, when was that?" Molitor interposed here.

"Two days before I was arrested," was the answer.

"That agrees with the *portier's* deposition, who stated that he had seen you come home from the Park, in a highly excited state," confirmed the Commissary.

"What happened next?" inquired Judge Feilen.

The American cast down his eyes, frowning fiercely.

"I wrote to my brother, after I had made sure of his treason, a few words only—in fact, if I remember right, it was nothing but the word: "Blackguard!" three times repeated. Contrary to my habit I had left the hotel on that day only in the afternoon; my brother called during my absence, perhaps to justify himself, perhaps to induce me with his honeyed speeches to leave Germany and to return to my new home. He evidently was afraid I might call on my darling and expose him in all his black villainy. This was why he insisted upon seeing me. I was induced to consent to that secret meeting at his villa in Seaton; where we were, of course, secure against any intrusion."

"And what happened at this interview? Was your brother there before you?" asked the Judge.

"Yes, indeed!" answered the American. "He was waiting for me at the outer garden-gate. We exchanged greetings coolly enough, and he told me that he had chosen his Villa for our meeting, because here we were less likely to be interrupted. Then we went through the little front garden to the house, and he took me into a room which was lighted; we sat down at a table, one facing the other. He offered me a cigar, but I declined, and at once overwhelmed him with a flood of reproaches. I have to confess that I became very violent, for I am accustomed to call a spade a spade; but I surely had ground to be indignant. Put yourself in my

place, gentlemen. A whole long life I had lost! Twenty years I had mourned a loved one, whom I thought dead; not a morning had risen on which I had not, with my mind's eye, seen the lost one; no evening had gone but I had added Ada to those I prayed for—and now it turned out that all my terrible suffering had been caused by the villainy of a man, whom I had to call brother! And she—she must have suffered as much as I had suffered. For I know her heart, I know how true it is; she was attached to me with a love which is without break or end, and goes far beyond the grave.

"Now this man—my brother!—sat facing me, with his cold smile on his lips and his airy, supercilious look in his eyes, staring at me, whom he had robbed of twenty years of existence, of my whole life's happiness, replying to my accusation with a cold-blooded smile. He did not even endeavor to clear himself of the charges. And I knew that it was not even Love which had made him steal my heart's idol. I had already learnt that his married life was not a happy one, and now he had the effrontery to tell me that very soon after his marriage he had been cured, as he called it, of his foolish passion. Ada had found him out; she had discovered that he had betrayed both of us, and had turned from him with contempt.

"I became enraged and little was wanting to bring matters to a fateful crisis. He insisted upon my being compelled to make a choice: to be silent and to leave at once, or to wander into the Penitentiary.

With his cold, diabolical smile, he explained to me that it was in his power to crush me if I should dare to expose him, as a liar, before his wife. I was to go away, with bleeding heart, without seeing Ada,—whom I love with undiminished fervor,—without having explained to her why and in what manner they had succeeded in separating us.

"Utter disgust seized me; I could not bear to be any longer in company with the man whom the same mother had nursed in childhood; I wanted to go, and turned my back upon him. I feel it now how I hurried through the little garden, how the blood rushed in hot currents to my head, and wrath had made me drunk. All of a sudden he was once more at my side; he would not leave me, for fear I might after all expose him, and he poured forth abominable threats: the brother vowed he would surrender the brother to the Criminal Courts for a crime which he had himself instigated. I tore myself from him and we got a little apart in the street.

"Then he suddenly coupled the name of her whom I worship like a saint, in a wretched, unbearable manner; he dared to say that no doubt I had already, behind his back, entered into a conspiracy with her, and this meeting was all a plot to get the better of him. Then I lost all control over myself; my rage got the better of myself; I raised my cane and struck him once, twice! Then he showed his trickish, wicked character; he called out as if wounded unto death, and in insane terror ran against that new building nearly opposite his villa, before

which we had been standing. I turned from him with utter disgust and walked on. At the same time—for not two seconds could have passed—I heard a low, subdued outcry, and instantly after it a crashing. I turned back, but although there was a lantern dimly burning on the fence, I could distinguish nothing. He had evidently stumbled and fallen in some way behind the plank-fence. I took it for granted that he had met with some accident, but I was still too infuriated to creep down and see what had happened. I was content to hurry on in order to summon the watchman. God is my witness, if I had suspected what had happened, although he was my deadly enemy, the destroyer of my life's happiness, I would have hastened to his assistance. I little suspected that all assistance would then already have been unavailing!

"Now you know everything. If I am guilty, you will proceed according to your laws. But as truly as I believe I am an honest man, this is the truth and the whole truth."

The statement of the American had made a deep and lasting impression upon both the Judge and Molitor. The last doubt that might have lingered after Tibbeck's confession had vanished. The Judge reflected a moment; then he rose, and approaching the American, he said:

"I believe your words and, although I cannot approve of your action on that night, I can at least understand it. But there are certain formalities to be observed. Are you prepared to prove in any way

the peculiar conduct of your brother, and at the same time show that you were so terribly excited, at that critical moment, as to raise your cane against your own brother?"

The American's straightforward eyes looked at the Judge with perfect candor as he said:

"Yes, I can. I see now I ought to have spoken sooner. But the fear of being really sent to prison for life, and thus to cause ineffable grief to her whom I still love, kept me back. You have confiscated my trunk, I believe?"

"Yes," replied Molitor. "All the contents have been entered on our books and are in safe-keeping."

"And the papers in the secret compartment?"

"What! A secret compartment? We have looked for one, but I must confess we have not found one."

A slight almost imperceptible smile curled the prisoner's lips.

"It is not easily found," he said. "Well, there you will find all my brother's letters, from the first lying letter, in which he informed me of my Ada's death, and came near killing me also. A vague apprehension, which I could never explain to myself, prompted me to keep every one of these letters. They will show you his treachery better than any words of mine can do."

"But were you really content to beat the unfortunate man—did you not pursue him on the other side of the fence?"

"No. As truly as God may help me in my last

hour," replied Johannes Wigan, and calmly met the searching eye of the Judge.

"This alters the case very essentially. Instead of a terrible crime, which we have taken for granted during all these months, the event is a mere accident, much to be lamented, but involving no criminal guilt. I cannot restore you to liberty, because all the papers have been sent to the Higher Court; but I shall make my report of to-day's session this evening, and our friend, the Commissary will, I am sure, not cause any delay in the proceedings."

A long, deep drawn sigh, rose from the prisoner's heart, as he looked at the Judge with doubting eyes.

"Do you mean that I may hope to be restored to freedom; that I may enjoy life once more?"

The tall, strong man began to tremble; he sank into the nearest chair. Thus he remained, motionless, for some time. Molitor felt deep compassion for the man; he went up to him, seized both his hands, and said:

"Take courage, Mr. Wigan. What you may have done contrary to the laws of God and of Man, you have amply expiated by your months of captivity. Look hopefully to the Future, to compensate you for all you have endured. I am engaged to marry Mrs. Wigan's only daughter, and if you will permit me, I can be the mediator between you and that excellent, sorely-tried lady."

Then Johannes Wigan's eyes suddenly shone with almost dazzling brilliancy; he jumped up and passionately pressing the young man's hands, he said:

"I have your word for it. I shall see my Ada again. My Ada! that is indeed bliss. I can hardly conceive the happiness."

The Judge was deeply touched by the man's frank enjoyment of hopes revived; he proceeded at once to fulfill the conditions required in such cases, and early the next morning the papers were all ready and dispatched. The curious chain of circumstances which had led to the unintentional calamity, was looked upon by all who knew the remarkable case, as the punishment which Providence had inflicted upon the infamous brother.

At the same time, the secret compartment in the American's trunk was opened in his presence, and found to contain, as he had stated, all the letters written by his brother. Even the very first hastily written note, in which he informed Johannes of his Ada's death, caused by intense grief over the crime he had committed, was not missing. The whole tissue of falsehoods, woven to keep the brother away from his native land and his home, was exposed, and not a doubt was left of his treachery and villainy.

These results, combined with the mechanic's deposition under oath, established the innocence of the American, and two days later he was free. The Commissary had claimed the privilege of accompanying the man,—whom he had so long firmly believed a criminal and a most dangerous criminal,—on his progress from prison to freedom. But this

was not his only mission, he had another duty to fulfill which was important.

Rolf Molitor had, the day before, with great caution, and proceeding very slowly, informed the sorely-tried lady of the marvelous surprise in store for her. At first the poor, feeble woman had incredulously shaken her head upon hearing the wonderful story. The thought that he whom she had mourned so many years, and to whose grave she had made her annual pilgrimage as to a sacred spot, should still be on earth, and might possibly meet her in flesh and blood, was so overwhelming, that she could not realize the fact. At the same time her nervous system was so painfully overwrought, that impoverished as her blood was, the physician feared the worst. He told the daughter, as he had already informed the Commissary, that great joy might as readily kill as cure, and that these hours would certainly form a crisis in the destiny of the dear lady.

When at last Johannes Wigan himself, led by the Commissary of Police, entered the silent little room, when he rapidly advanced toward the frail form which was shrinking into a corner of the small sofa, and now looked up at him with frightened, uncertain glances, he could at first see nothing clearly—the tears obscured his eyes. Silently he sank upon his knees before the beloved of his youth, and holding both her hands closely pressed to his heart, he could only cry out :

"Ada! My Ada!"

Then deep silence reigned for a while.

The young people had preferred in all quietness to withdraw unnoticed, so as to leave the two sufferers perfectly free to tell each other what they had endured. Hour after hour passed, till at last Johannes Wigan came out of the room and spoke to Erna. She had, in the meantime, learned from the lips of her lover, in most carefully chosen words and forbearing language, what could no longer remain concealed from her. But the newly-found uncle left her no time for reflection; deeply moved and warmly interested, he held her affectionately in his arms, and said:

"Not a word of the Past, my dear, sweet child!" touching her forehead with a loving kiss. "You are her child, and that alone fills my heart with ineffable love for you. Call me father, for I shall be your father, not in name only, but in the spirit and in truth. In such great happiness as God has bestowed upon us all, hatred is silenced and all passions are put to rest."

The famous murder-case, so complicated, apparently, and, like most of the genuine *causes célèbres* so simple, when once unravelled, furnished food for talk to the inhabitants of the great Imperial city for a long time. Richard Dunsing and the dishonest head clerk, Slummer, were indicted and tried. Even in the Court and in the presence of the Judge, they pursued each other with grim hatred, trying to injure the one the other as much as they could. Thus it came that the sentence was severe, and

they were likely to spend the rest of their lives in the Penitentiary. Tibbeck escaped more leniently. His penitent confession, made at the happy moment when all was at stake, and the strong temptation to which he had succumbed when starving, were taken into account, and a year later he was restored to his family.

Johannes Wigan had, in the meantime, taken great delight in providing for Tibbeck's poor wife and daughter, so that, when he returned a free man once more, he found them installed in a nice, comfortable house, already filled with tenants. His daughter had recently married her old admirer, who kept a restaurant in the same building.

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